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NEW STATESMAN

Alexander Cockburn: Jimmy Comes Home
John Porteous: Mr Healey's Ninety Days
Murray Sayle on Spy Catching in Tokyo
Mary Holland: A Gay Time in Belfast
Arthur Marshall: Dear Marje Proops
David Garnett: Lady into Woolf
Michael Davie on Oxford in the Twenties
Neal Ascherson: Masaryk Naomi Lewis: L. M. Alcott

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Time to Attack the Racists

The last time that fascist-infected thugs stirred up violence between the races – in Notting Hill in 1968 – they were promptly isolated by political condemnation and severely dealt with by the law. Yet when Southall, a district known to police authorities as a strikingly law-abiding suburb, is suddenly menaced by the poisonous danger of racialism and violence, a kind of lassitude steals over our politicians. In the United States it would be a very poor city mayor who did not make an immediate visit to a scene of racial turbulence. Yet it was a full four days before the Home Secretary found time to pay a call to Southall, and the same period had elapsed before the Prime Minister made his own rather down-beat condemnation. Surely a more prompt response would not have weakened the pound? Both White and Asian community leaders, striving to hold the line, were left on their own for the most difficult period. As we go to press, almost a week after the incidents, neither Margaret Thatcher nor Keith Joseph has taken their championship of individual liberty as far as making any declaration about the rights of our minorities. Mr Grimond, too, has missed the chance to crown his rejuvenated leadership with any ringing statement of Gladstonian principles. The same mealy-mouthed attitudes were evident in the recent exchange on the right of British citizens from Malawi to settle here, and in the subsequent debate on what the 'liberal' Tories call 'demographic change' there was an unwontedly apologetic tone from the Government front bench, a kind of defensiveness which is not justified by the strong positions which need to be upheld. (Of some of the noises from Labour's back benches, the less said the better.)

It was always true of Enoch Powell's demagogy, and if it had not been true he would not be the deadly influence that he is, that his prophecies stood a chance of vindication. Large-scale Commonwealth immigration could indeed lead to racial violence *if other things remained equal.* It has always been the job of the Labour movement to ensure that other things did not; that there would be an attack on urban blight, on decaying inner cities and on the other roots of tension, as well as on prejudice itself and those who tried to foment it.

Today, with social spending cut back and unemployment rising, there will be many confused and resentful people who suspect that things might be less cramped without our Commonwealth brothers, and the scum of the National Front are always on hand to direct their own personality disorders at just such a target. It is utterly mysterious to most observers that open incitement is permitted in the form of hate marches through peaceful immigrant areas. Why should this intimidation be allowed to persist, and breed fear and retaliation? The Public Order Act set definite limits to the last generation of fascists, and to their ability to insult and threaten the Jews. It should not be allowed to gather dust.

There have been several honourable exceptions to the general fatalism and cowardice. The *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* has taken a firm and principled editorial line, and it cannot be accused – the favourite innuendo of the closet racialists – of 'living apart from the problem'. 'The problem', in any case, is far more intense than many liberally-minded politicians are prepared to admit. To take up Mr Powell on his hideous analogy with Ulster, it would have been well within the compass of a Labour government before 1968 to clear that political slum and thereby avert the peril of sectarian violence (a 'tribal war', incidentally, which the upholders of white civilisation tend to ignore). But the slum was not cleared, and now the inhabitants are taking it out on each other – not actively discouraged by Mr Powell. If racialism makes any further strides in this country, it will not just be a defeat for the well-meaning and the humane. It will be a reverse for everything that Labour has ever stood for; a tragedy for the whole idea of the rational application of planning to human need. Racialism is not just an ugly derangement in itself; it is a distraction from the real problems of society and as such a deadly enemy of democracy. Where is the full-scale government counter-attack?

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Spotlight on Politics

James Fenton

Late Night Line-Up

Here in the Palace of Westminster, in the thronging corridors and lobbies, your correspondent has ears but no eyes. He is like some abstruse invention by the philosopher Strawson – he may report what others see, but only so long as he was not himself present. He may report what he is told, but not what he overhears, and since he may not attribute what he is told, and since he is not permitted to take out a notebook, his reports are only tolerable so long as they are *not* susceptible of proof. Standing on the terrace late at night, he experiences a curious bifurcation of the senses. Those to whom he is talking are invisible to him, but if he looks across the river – he can see perfectly well. Up and down go the pleasure boats, broadcasting their attributable music. But the conversation in your correspondent's ear has to pass through a magic scrambler before it may be relayed.

It is a hot night. Your correspondent is permitted to record that he is already, as they used to say, 'one over the eight'. But we must assume that the company he keeps is as sober as a convention of proverbial judges. From time to time the boats pass dangerously close to the parapet. Close enough for a rabid cat or an illegal immigrant gerbil to jump ship. If rabies came to Westminster, how could it ever be stamped out? Would they wait for a three-line whip and then gas all the Members? Already there is talk of putting down Michael Brotherton 'just in case'.

These all-night sessions, these mad tablings of 150 amendments, these declarations of all-out war are dangerous both to the nation's health and to mine. Somebody should take Margaret Thatcher on one side and say: for God's sake lay off. For God's sake have a care. This is not some gimcrack toy that you are throwing round the room. It is our democratic system. It was hewn from the living aspirations of the people. It was fashioned from centuries of struggle. It was watered with the aspirations of millions. It was tilled by their trust and fertilised by their faith. And if, after being hewn, fashioned, watered, tilled and fertilised, it looks a bit like a jam omelette that's been through the spin-dryer – that's no reason to give it up as a bad job. Patience is required. Patience, affection and Tender Loving Care.

For the fact of the matter is – is it not? – that Thatcher at present is on what is obscurely termed 'a hiding to nothing'. I warned her last week to resist the temptation to go too far. But she had already set in motion the machinery of total war. By which I mean that Reginald Maudling was to be brought back from Africa and pushed through the lobbies – a fearsome sight indeed. And yet by the early hours, after several resounding defeats, the Opposition ran short of tellers on the first day of the new campaign. Then there was the censure motion, put forward in private as a simple means of appearing still to oppose, while also securing an economic debate. I asked one Tory why they were going ahead with this foolish scheme, and he laughed hopelessly: 'Well, it's a long time since we've had one,' he said.

When the Labour Members heard, after the excitement of Denis Healey's statement, that the censure motion was to go ahead, they could not believe their luck. The general opinion is that it's very bad publicity for Thatcher to be seen to be messing around when the Government is actually doing rather well. The Treasury declarations that the pound is undervalued have received at least a temporary justification. Since then the trade figures have done what Healey said they would. And a new element has been added to the Government's publicity – the central banks' Good Housekeeping seal of approval. All in all, if the Tories can't do better than the pathetic performances by Sir Geoffrey Howe on Monday, then they should lie low for a bit, and wait for another spell of bad weather.

The Tories are unhappy – unhappy with Labour of course, but also unhappy about the way Thatcher is running the show and the way that their own Whips' Office has mismanaged the campaign. They would have been happier if the usual channels had never been blocked off. One of them described Humphrey Atkins to me as 'an ex-navy man with a second-class brain' – nice, but not up to the job. And then there is a constant feeling that, whether or not this is inevitable, the Opposition front bench has lost too many of its good men. Obviously, since so many of the famous figures of the Heath regime have gone their different ways, the shadow cabinet is a bit obscure. But does it have to be so paltry? Can Thatcher continue to afford the luxury of not employing Peter Walker? It is not surprising that the Tories have begun to look to the return of Edward Heath to the fold. Although in fact Heath was never really out of the fold. He had made it perfectly clear that he was not considering any other job than politics and the House of Commons. In other words, he has always been on stand-by, and still is.

There is another reason why the Tories are unhappy, which was explained to me this week and which I pass on for what it's worth. It's a sociological reason. In the past, the argument runs, the Tories were united through the country houses. They entertained each other for long weekends, in weather such as we are enjoying at the present, and they were united through social background, through the great families, through the old Establishment. Whereas now they have nothing to unite them. They are a party composed largely of professional men, though still in the process of transformation. But the garden parties are over, the brilliant lawns lie fallow, weeds choke the gravel paths and the roses have turned to briars.

Among the new Tories, there is a lack of camaraderie, a lack of common purpose. My informant referred with envy to the sort of unity which exists on the Labour benches. He thought that Labour were generally more enthusiastic, that they were more loyal – by and large – to their front bench. He had noticed that Labour tended to cheer their own men on with much more verve than the Tories ever do. In short, he was rather jealous of the Labour Party as a party. I thought this was rather a touching and unusual perception.

It is certainly true that the Labour Party in Parliament have just been pepped up. I'm told that nobody except Callaghan and Healey knew what the Chancellor's statement was going to contain, when they came into the House on Monday. The Left were quite prepared to hold off their attack, in the expectation of some vicious criticism from the Tories. They thought that they would give Healey a bit of a day off. But then Healey went through the Opposition like a knife through butter, and John Pardoe got up and said that a simple change of government would make no difference at all, and everything suddenly turned out all right.

In the PLP meeting afterwards, Healey spoke to a somewhat astonished audience about the enormous boom that the country was just about to enter. It was going to be terrific. They would win the next general election hands down. Sterling was recovering, and the economy was going to pick up so fast – so fast that in order to make way for this boom there would have to be public expenditure cuts next year in order to make way for it. Make room for the boom, that was the slogan. And then Callaghan, who had apparently been eyeing Healey's performance with something akin to envy, told how he had just been with the unions, and how marvellously restored and reinforced he always felt after contact with the grass roots. At the same time, the pound was rising, like a lark at daybreak, rising so fast and so high that it soon became nothing more than a speck in the firmament. A moment later it had vanished altogether from sight.

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John Porteous

Mr Healey's Ninety Days

All governments find it difficult to respond to market forces. The trouble with markets is that they rarely do what they are expected to do and never do what they are told. The problem is compounded for governments of the Left since markets are made by the interplay of propertied and moneyed interests, whereas the Left in theory represents those who have no such interests. Hence the conspiracy theory, the readiness of politicians to declare that a sterling crisis, for example, is caused by the concerted action of the financial community to thwart the will of the democratically elected government.

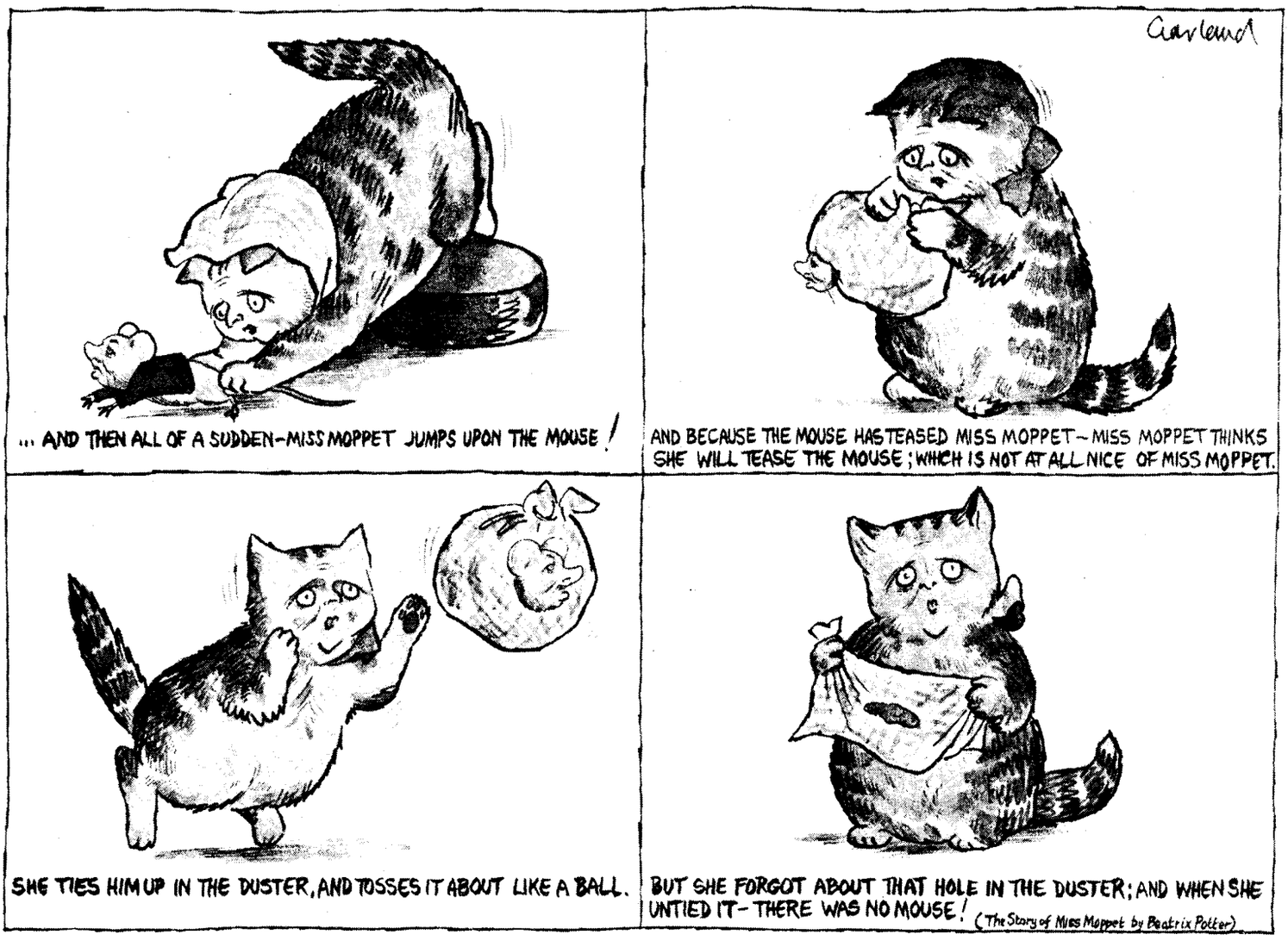
That some people within the financial community would rejoice to see another Labour government destroyed by financial crisis does not in the least validate the conspiracy theory. When even concerted international government intervention has only a temporary effect upon the foreign exchange market, it is nonsense to suppose that a few politically motivated bankers can push it around.

It would be a great comfort to believe that our present predicament could be helped by a parliamentary inquiry into who has been selling sterling recently, as advocated by Mr Gwilym Roberts. In three months the Bank of England spent $3,100m. in holding the fall in sterling to 15 per cent. The sort of selling which causes a decline of that order is not attributable just to speculation, nor even to commercial leads and lags. Much of it, and the experience of the banks seems to confirm this, must have come from overseas central banks disposing of their sterling reserves. Mr Gwilym Roberts's inquiry would reveal only that the sales had been made by those who had a perfect right to sell, and moreover whose readiness to hold sterling a year or more ago provided much of the finance for the social contract.

As it happens, market forces worked on the Government's side during the whole of 1975, to the chagrin of orthodox and right-wing financiers. Those who took the grimmest view of the oil crisis of 1974 were astonished at the readiness of some Opec countries to give credits to the British Government to cover the oil deficit. At the time of the 1975 budget it seemed impossible that the borrowing requirement for that financial year could be met without increasing the rate of inflation. But the plunge in world interest rates came just in time. The Government was able to play the difficult game of, on the one hand, maintaining a relatively high enough return to keep the foreign depositors happy, and, on the other, of lowering interest rates just enough to entice domestic funds into a rising gilt-edged market. There was no talk then of an international bankers' conspiracy to sell Britain short; rather it was clever Mr Healey and clever Mr Lever who could so turn the financial mechanism to the Government's advantage. Much as the French spoke of clever M. Necker and clever M. Calonne back in 1788.

To borrow heavily in a year of special stringency, as many did during the recession induced by the oil crisis, was a reasonable expedient. But whereas other countries used the time which they bought to retrench, to lower their economic expectations and to restore their trade balance, we spent our credits on maintaining the social contract.

In its second, post-incomes policy, phase, the essence of the contract was that the unions would observe the pay limit in consideration of the maintenance by the Government of the social wage through public expenditure. From the national point of view this was a bad bargain, since the sad truth was that, pay restraint or not,


... AND THEN ALL OF A SUDDEN-MISS MOPPET JUMPS UPON THE MOUSE!
AND BECAUSE THE MOUSE HAS TEASED MISS MOPPET-MISS MOPPET THINKS SHE WILL TEASE THE MOUSE; WHICH IS NOT AT ALL NICE OF MISS MOPPET.
SHE TIES HIM UP IN THE DUSTER, AND TOSSES IT ABOUT LIKE A BALL.
BUT SHE FORGOT ABOUT THAT HOLE IN THE DUSTER; AND WHEN SHE UNTIED IT-THERE WAS NO MOUSE!
(The Story of Miss Moppet by Beatrix Potter)

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we could not afford the social wage if it had to be financed by borrowed money rather than by taxation. Borrowing for consumption in that fashion must lead either to a point at which the interest on the debt becomes even more intolerable than paying one's way, or to the creditor asking for his money back. Either way the consumption must come to a halt in the end, and maybe the principal has to be found by cutting back on something still more essential.

As Britain has drifted closer to this classic bankrupt's situation, when if we deflate we cannot afford the interest on past borrowing and if we inflate we cannot borrow any more, the market conditions have turned suddenly to our disadvantage. The feature of 1975 was the weakness of the dollar. Now the dollar has become attractive. The American economic recovery is under way, yet as it gathers speed the Federal Reserve, alert to the danger of recurring inflation, is already moving to restrain the growth of money supply by raising interest rates. Some such development was always probable this year. Like all widely awaited financial movements it took place sooner and more abruptly than most people expected.

This has probably been the most important single factor in determining the timing of sterling's fall. The action on sterling is twofold. Foreign holders sell it in order to move into the more attractive alternative. Domestically the protective rise in interest rates which follows, and which we have already seen in the form of a 2½-per-cent rise in minimum lending rate, makes the problem of funding the borrowing requirement even more intractable. Yet if it is not funded inflation will accelerate and sterling will fall still further.

The danger of our situation is this. The Government's whole economic policy depends upon the acceptance by the unions of the 4½-per-cent pay norm. But it has offered as the price of this the maintenance of a level of public expenditure which it cannot hope to finance except by an uncovenanted increase in the rate of inflation.

The monetarist argument at this point is clear. Cut the deficit, continue to rein in the money supply and leave pay restraint (take it or leave it) to bring its own reward in the form of a lower level of unemployment than would otherwise certainly follow from this course of action. The argument of the Left is no less stringent in its implications. Keep the deficit, but introduce import controls, stricter price and capital controls and direction of investment – the siege economy.

Either way you cut the standard of living: by the monetarist proposal with a fall in real wages and a rise in unemployment; by the other with rationing, queues, shortages, direction of labour and concealed unemployment. Both proposals have the merit of bringing the nation face to face with reality. Both, perhaps for that very reason, are deemed to be politically impossible.

The least satisfactory course would be to rely upon the respite given to the pound by the $5,300m. standby credit just arranged with the Group of Ten and others, to cajole the TUC into compliance with the pay policy on 16 June, and then to pull the rug out from under the union leaders with emergency cuts in public expenditure when that credit expires and the pound turns down again.

After a fall of 15 per cent a rally was to be expected in sterling in any case and the new credit has greatly strengthened it, just as a similar arrangement boosted the lira to the tune of 10 per cent a few weeks ago. But the credit only gives us time, and time is not on the debtor's side if he does not use it effectively Even the Italian deal was accompanied by an increase in taxation and an import deposit scheme.

Mr Healey has just renewed our bill as it fell due – at 90 days. If he spends those days watching out for the amber light, the first light he sees could turn out to be the flashing blue of the emergency services.

Naomi Shepherd

Professor Yadin's Gamble

Professor Yigael Yadin's guest appearance on the Israeli political stage last month was the climax to many months of speculation about this enigmatic and talented man's political intentions. While his television interview may have disappointed those who expected the lawgiver to descend from the mount, the shock waves set off in the Knesset are still vibrating. Several outsiders have recently made forays into Israel politics, but none of Yadin's stature, and certainly none who dared deliver an ultimatum to the country's leadership.

Intellectuals have traditionally given a wide berth to politics in Israel, but Yadin is no academic recluse. His television interviewer irritated him visibly with references to De Gaulle; temperamentally Yadin probably is nearer to Malraux. Soldier, administrator, intellectual with a touch of the showman, Yadin has never been out of the public eye. As Israel's second Chief of Staff, slated to become Defence Minister in his early thirties, Yadin created the Israeli army's famous reserves system, and contributed to the doctrine of regional defence. As the archaeologist who commanded the excavation of Massada and whose team unearthed the Bar Kochba letters, documenting Jewish resistance to Rome, Yadin is a cult leader in a country where, as he himself has said, archaeology is a modern religion.

Thus Yadin is an obvious choice for those seeking a leader with charisma, and no Israeli politician has yet returned his fire. A *Ha'aretz* columnist, anticipating Yadin's début, pointed out that the maestro's periodic comments on current events have been commonplace. Subsequent critics have pointed out that there was no real innovation in the policies he now has proposed: electoral reform, greater efficiency in administration, a crackdown on corruption, modernisation on territorial issues – all these have been advanced by Labour politicians. But this criticism dodges the central question in Israeli politics today: whether any leader can form a cabinet which can achieve consensus on policy and subsequently carry out the measures it proposes. Here the unequivocal character of Yadin's conditions for entering political life suggest that his gamble might just come off. Yadin insists that he is not interested in forming one more splinter group; that he will not compromise on basic issues with any potential partners; and that he would be prepared to serve either as the head of a powerful Centre-Left party capable of dictating terms to any coalition, or – if feasible – as Prime Minister. The question which now arises is who are to be Yadin's followers?

Part of the public tension preceding Yadin's début originated in the uncertainty as to Yadin's actual political views. His name had been linked frequently with right-wing figures and hardliners on territorial issues like ex-air chief Ezer Weizmann, physicist and defence adviser Yuval Ne'eman, Meir Zorca of the Israel Lands Authority, and others. But Yadin's stated views have indicated no significant deviation from middle-of-the-road policies, especially on territorial issues: he is against annexation of the West Bank because of the implicit dangers for Israeli democracy were Israel to refuse civil rights to the Arabs there, and dangers for Jewish sovereignty were she to grant them; he rejects the idea of a third (Palestinian) state between the desert and the sea, and stresses that the Jordan is Israel's 'defence border'. Only Yadin's contention that Israel should be prepared to talk to Arafat if the PLO gained control of Jordan has suggested that Yadin was a student of Ben Gurion's pragmatism.

But while Yadin has openly challenged the present Labour leadership, calling on Rabin to resign for his inability to carry out proposed policies, is he asking to be carried on Labour's shoulders? Some critics have suggested that Yadin is simply naïve in believing that Labour, desperate in the face of a possible right-wing threat at the elections next year, might call on him to save their own skin; or that he fondly hopes that the veteran leadership of 'historic Mapai' will turn to him as an alternative to a leader chosen from the rebel sect, Rafi. Yadin certainly gives evidence of being a newcomer to politics: a master of the academic aside, carrying his pointer on the rostrum like a swordstick, he was ill at ease on television with political jargon, fumbling miserably with anecdotes about the Pentagon and Sandhurst,

If Yadin believes he can split Labour, his plan may already have backfired. His appearance has strengthened those party bosses who are backing Defence Minister Peres as a rival to the increasingly beleagured Itzhak Rabin. However, without the ability to draw off at least a significant proportion of Labour votes, and realign the

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protest movement and all the smaller parties of Left and Centre, it is difficult to see how Yadin can achieve the minimum ten seats in the Knesset (about 12 per cent of Israel's voters) he has set as a condition for entering politics. Several members of these parties – Independent Liberals, the Civil Rights movement, the LeAm Right-Centre group, and Shinui, the embryo protest party – have already expressed their solidarity, but the notorious indiscipline of the Left must be giving Yadin pause.

For all these reasons, most of the Knesset pundits expect Yadin to fail, and the silence of the big league so far suggests that they are comfortably waiting for Yadin to trip himself up. Nevertheless, to gauge Yadin's real effect on Israeli politics it is important to consider what he might achieve were he to succeed, particularly on two issues he has stressed are central to his beliefs: electoral reform on the domestic front, and a clear-cut stand against annexation, in foreign affairs.

Yadin insists that if he were to be in the position to influence or lead the Government, he would insist on holding fresh elections within three months in accordance with a new electoral system based on regional constituencies, instead of the present proportional representation system unique among the world's democracies. The present system not only encourages the wild growth of tiny factions, but concentrates power in the hands of the party functionaries who draw up the lists of candidates. An electoral reform draft law which many regard as essential to the development of Israeli democracy, having gained a first reading majority, has since lain in the Knesset committee rooms, like some respected but ultimately embarrassing visitor, and few people believe it will be passed even in time for the 1981 elections. While Yadin, like all the law's champions, tends to exaggerate its possible benefits (it could scarcely resolve the rifts and rivalries within Labour, which also contribute to the unworkability of the coalition system) electoral reform is probably the only constitutional means of achieving the radical realignment which Israeli politics badly need.

Where foreign policy is concerned, Yadin's moderate leadership would not necessarily herald a parade of Israeli concessions. He has been very careful to stress that actual withdrawal is still distant and should accompany only watertight safeguards. On the other hand, there could be an important change in Israel's diplomatic tactics were Yadin to become Prime Minister. Rabin's line has been that while Israel is ultimately prepared to make concessions, no diplomatic initiative could be undertaken, or options stated, which would suggest Israeli weakness under Arab pressure. Yadin's line appears to be the direct antithesis of Rabin's: that Israel should present a conciliatory diplomatic stance, but ultimately show the necessary toughness where Arab concessions are concerned.

If Labour is really to stand up to Yadin's challenge, it will have to recognise the force of his arguments on foreign policy. This may ultimately be Professor Yadin's most important contribution to Israel's election campaign next year.

Jerusalem

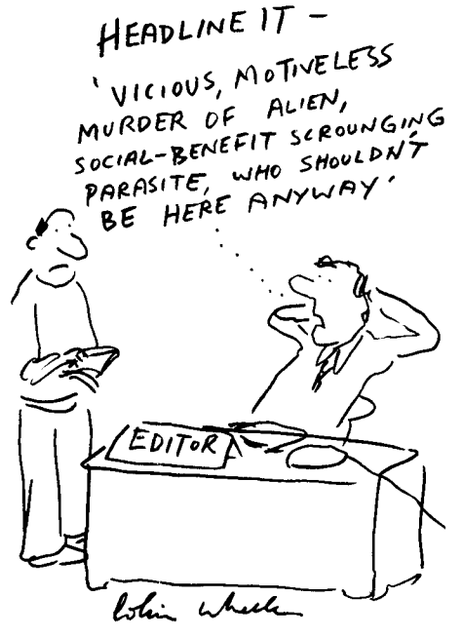
Mary Holland

A Gay Time in Belfast

Mr Merlyn Rees's promise to restore the primacy of the police in Northern Ireland has been received with a certain grim humour by the province's homosexuals. In recent weeks 22 homosexuals have been arrested in Belfast alone and held for periods of up to 15 hours. They claim to have been questioned in prurient detail about their sex lives, asked to sign statements incriminating others, threatened in some cases with forcible medical examination and in others told that the police will inform their parents and employers of their homosexuality. Diaries, letters, files of Gay Liberation organisations and passports have been taken.

Nineteen of the 22 arrested have been men over the age of 21 – the youngest was 17. Not that age is of any relevance to the situation in Northern Ireland, where homosexuality is still illegal. The provisions of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act which legalised homosexual acts between consenting males over the age of 21 have never been extended to the province. Instead the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, which carries a maximum of life imprisonment, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1883 still apply. This week two university students, one aged 24, one 20, were tried in Coleraine, Co. Londonderry, under the latter Act. In his summing-up the judge reminded the prisoners that the sentence for their crime used to be death. In this case, given the excellent character references from a priest and a psychiatrist, he settled for giving the 24-year-old a six-month suspended sentence, and the 20-year-old a year on probation, on condition that he had psychiatric treatment and promised to stay away from corrupting influences.

Of those arrested in Belfast itself no one has yet been charged with anything relating to his sexual activities, although there have been two cases of leading Gay Liberation activists being charged with possession of cannabis. Both were given suspended sentences. But the failure to charge anyone with homosexuality has not led to any lessening of police activity. For Richard Kennedy, the 30-year-old lorry driver who is secretary of the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association, the police have now become a familiar presence. Since they first arrested him in January they have come to his house six times, usually early in the morning, often on the flimsiest of pretexts. A couple of recent visits have made him wryly suspicious that he has now become something of a tourist attraction for the police, to be shown off by sophisticated Belfast detectives to gawking policemen up from the country.


HEADLINE IT –
'VICIOUS, MOTIVELESS MURDER OF ALIEN, SOCIAL-BENEFIT SCROUNGING PARASITE, WHO SHOULDN'T BE HERE ANYWAY'
EDITOR

Mr Kennedy's problems, and those of Belfast's other homosexuals, began last January when the mother of an 18-year-old boy in Armagh read a letter from his lover in Belfast and complained to police headquarters. It seems that as well as providing evidence of a homosexual relationship the letter also sang the praises of some cannabis which the writer had acquired, known locally as Glengormley Gold. Glengormley is a suburb of Belfast. The police raided the house where the letter-writer was staying, which coincidentally happened to be the home of the secretary of the Committee for Homosexual Law Reform in Northern Ireland. Sure enough, a small quantity of the said Glengormley Gold was found. This was taken away, and so, for good measure, were all the files of the Law Reform Committee. Later the secretary of the committee was taken in, questioned for three hours and asked to sign a statement about his homosexual activities. Later still the police began to follow up the correspondence in the files and to arrest other homosexuals.

All this might possibly be dismissed as a routine drugs case. But what has followed since has been less easy to explain. There have been a series of raids on the homes of Gay Liberation activists, private letters and diaries have been taken. More alarming, in a society which still regards homosexuality with deep suspicion and disapproval, files containing the names and addresses of several hundred homosexuals have been taken. Many of these are young people, frightened that their families will find out about their sexual orientation. Nor is the fear an idle one. People have been arrested in front of their families and the police have made it quite clear to parents why they are being taken in.

What mystifies Northern Ireland's Gay Liberation activists is why the police should have embarked on all this at precisely the time when, it seems to them, their campaign to get the law changed in Northern Ireland is gaining a sympathetic public hearing. Although the 1967 British law has never applied to the province, the official policy does seem to have been one of live and let

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live. Homosexuals have been prosecuted very rarely in recent years and then (as they still are in England and Wales) only for offences involving minors. For their part, Ulster's politicians have been somewhat shamefaced about the difficulties of taking on the problem of law reform in a province which is still, on both sides of the sectarian divide, extremely conservative in its attitudes. When the Northern Ireland Homosexual Law Reform Committee was set up in 1974 its first optimistic act was to lobby the members of the local Assembly. Only one member gave them any promise of support. Nor have successive British ministers shown any eagerness to tackle reform. But in recent weeks there have been the first signs of a change in government attitudes. In March, in reply to a parliamentary question from Alan Beith, Mr Rees said that he was prepared to consider extending the 1967 Sexual Offences Act to Northern Ireland. Then, two weeks ago, a deputation from the two main campaigning organisations met British government officials for the first time and were told that any change in the law would depend on their mustering sufficient public support.

So why do the raids and arrests continue? One local theory is that it is precisely the Gay Liberation groups' campaign, drawing attention to the fact that there is a law against homosexuality and that they are breaking it, which has angered the authorities, in particular the police. As long as they dissembled in a docile fashion, the authorities were prepared to turn a blind eye. But the least of the ironies of the present situation is that an organisation called 'Cara Friend', described as Northern Ireland's 'only information and befriending service for gay men and women', was set up in 1974 with the help of a grant from the Department of Health and Social Security.

The initiative for resolving these contradictions now seems to lie with Mr Rees. There is a tragi-comic aspect to a situation in which the civilian death rate from sectarian assassinations is running higher than ever and the time of experienced detectives is taken up with reading the diaries of male adults to decide whom to question next about his sex life. As one of Belfast's harassed homosexuals put it last week: 'You'd think Mr Rees would want to encourage it, wouldn't you? It's almost the only form of non-sectarian activity left.'

Donald Gould

Drug Companies and the Third World

The methods used by drug companies for selling their nostrums have come in for some harsh criticism during recent years. Witness the Labour Party policy statement published at the end of April which called for a statutory curb on the amount of the taxpayers' money which the industry spends on promotion, alleging that it oversells its products by pressurising doctors through smooth-tongued reps, beguiling ads, and free dinners. However, Britain, in common with the United States and many other industrial nations, has strict regulations governing the promotion of medicines. The rules are aimed at ensuring that these potentially dangerous products are not recommended by their makers for unsuitable or indiscriminate use, and that adequate information, including warnings on known side-effects, is made available to the doctors who control their consumption. In the countries of the Third World the situation is very different. There may be no official controls at all, and where they do exist, the governments concerned commonly lack the means for seeing that they are enforced.

A year ago the World Health Organisation's annual report claimed that developing countries were being supplied with drugs which had not been authorised for sale in their country of origin, or which had been withdrawn for reasons of safety, or because they were ineffective. Within the past few days the Senate's Monopoly Subcommittee in Washington has been hearing from experts who have urged the need for the US Government to seek international agreement on safeguards designed to prevent the dishonest promotion of drugs. A witness from the University of California, Dr Milton Silverman, told the committee of several drugs from US manufacturers which are promoted in Latin America in terms vastly different from those used in the home market.

One of the most notorious is an antibiotic, chloramphenicol, which was introduced in the US in 1949. This was one of several antibiotics which the pharmaceutical industry assiduously sought out and developed following the dramatic impact and success of penicillin. It was hailed as a new wonder drug, and was widely prescribed for a time, even by experienced physicians, for all manner of infections, including viral infections (such as influenza, glandular fever, and the common cold) which do not respond to antibiotics at all. It *is* a highly effective anti-bacterial agent, but it will kill a small proportion of users (one in 25,000) by poisoning the bone marrow where the blood cells are manufactured.

Nevertheless, as a result of massive and skilful promotion by the manufacturers, Parke Davis, it continued to be used in vast quantities in the US, so that by 1960 more than 4 million Americans were receiving the drug each year. This produced an annual £30m. for the makers, and also a steady toll of unnecessary deaths.

Despite Senate inquiry revelations of its misuse, and temporary dips in sales, the continued vigorous promotion of the drug by Parke Davis, in which all the tricks of the trade were used to emphasise its virtues and play down its dangers (but without blatantly flouting the law), ensured that chloramphenicol remained a money spinner for many years. Now, at last, its use in Britain and the US and some other countries is recommended only for typhoid fever, and one or two other grave infections for which it is peculiarly suitable. This is not so everywhere. In 1972 a young British mother of three children died after she had bought a bottle of medicine containing chloramphenicol 'over the counter' in Spain for the treatment of a minor respiratory infection. In Spain the drug is freely sold and recommended for trivial complaints.

Spain is not the Third World, but that woman's death typifies what happens in countries where controls are lax. Dr Silverman told the Senate committee that the Parke Davis chloramphenicol sold in the US carries a long list of warnings about adverse reactions, whereas in Mexico the same preparation carries only muted and abbreviated cautions, and in Central America it is sold in packs bearing no mention of any danger at all. The same kind of irresponsible promotion is used for many other drugs.

In the US a steroid is sold with the warning that it may stunt growth in children and interfere with their sexual development. In Latin America it is promoted to doctors as useful for increasing appetite, weight and strength, which makes it sound as bland as Guinness, and the possible side-effects are either played down or not mentioned at all, according to the country. A spokesman for one large American drug company, Bristol Myers, has explained differences in labelling by saying 'Product documentation will sometimes vary with individual countries to reflect local needs, economics, health conditions and government regulations'. Put more brutally, the selling companies will get away with murder if they can.

The lack of responsibility shown in attempts to maximise drug sales in the Third World is not the fault of small fly-by-night, local firms, for the multinational companies have secured a stranglehold over the medicines market in the developing nations. In Venezuela and Brazil, for example, foreign concerns control 90 per cent of the trade. The selling techniques are directed from offices in Britain, the US, Germany, Switzerland and other places where the uses and abuses of modern pharmaceuticals are perfectly understood.

The drug manufacturers have done wondrous things for mankind. People like Ivan Illich, and some politically minded persons in this country, who abhor the idea of anybody making a profit out of disease, and who rant against the trade immoderately, have never experienced the grim frustration of attending hospital wards full of patients rotting and dying from syphillis, or tuberculosis, or leukemia, or schizophrenia, for whom, a mere 40 years ago, little or nothing could be done. Only the ignorant can be blind to the benefits received from the adventurers who have seen the money to be made from the invention and marketing of modern medicines. It would be a disaster if this most beneficial of all industries were to sign its own death warrant by allowing greed and the lust for commercial success to make it intolerable to the people it serves.

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Alexander Cockburn

Jimmy Comes Home

If the joyless prospect of having Jimmy Carter as the next President of the United States was scarcely dimmed by the three final primaries held last Tuesday, at least California did offer some enjoyable diversions. Take the television debate held in Los Angeles last Saturday between Senator John Tunney and Tom Hayden, noted radical and his challenger in the Democratic senatorial primary in this state. 'Senator Tunney,' said one of their interlocutors in those rich, deep tones of all American TV journalists, 'you are a man who is young, who is recently divorced, who does get around – if I can use that term – and your opponent, or at least supporters of your opponent, have even suggested you have dated teenagers . . .' Battling, as they say in the trade, to retain his composure and thinking of Wayne Hays, Tunney mumbled: 'Of course I dated teenagers, when I was a teenager, but it's false to say that I ever date teenagers.'

'But,' said the journalist, turning to Tom Hayden, 'is this not an issue raised by your camp?' As a matter of fact the teenage slur had been put about by a member of Hayden's campaign, namely his wife, Jane Fonda. Of the $1m. raised by the Hayden campaign, Fonda had also supplied $350,000 borrowed against fees for future movies. Also stemming from Hayden aficionados had come the gibe that 'John Tunney is a Chappaquiddick waiting to happen'. Tunney, it must be noted, is a close friend of Edward Kennedy.

Plainly, Hayden felt that his issue-oriented campaign might be looking a little undignified. To the journalist he replied: 'I think the reason Tunney is misunderstood is that he is a militant waffler who flips and flops on the issues.' Tunney brightened: 'Of course I have changed my mind, Tom, and I'm glad I've had that flexibility. But you, Tom, might debate with yourself. I can remember the time when you said the elective process was a hoax and that the way you changed things was through revolution.' Tunney paused, then slid in the knife. 'I can remember when you were not particularly friendly to Israel.' 'I have changed my mind on whether electoral politics is a hoax,' said Hayden, 'and I have always supported the right of Israel to exist. I think public opinion has changed tremendously since 1968 . . . and why does Senator Tunney have $200,000 in contributions from the oil companies?' 'Ha! Because I don't have a wife who gave me $350,000.'

I quote such exchanges merely to indicate that the blanket of banality swaddling the primary campaigns was not all-enveloping, and that indeed the Tunney-Hayden race showed that, even if the wrong man won, a good and instructive time could be had by all. Over the last eight months Tom Hayden – one of the founders of Students for a Democratic Society in the 1960s, one of the defendants in the trial of the Chicago Seven, had been mounting a vigorous campaign to win the senatorial nomination in California away from John Tunney. Tunney is commonly regarded as a liberal, if inane, senator.

Hayden did in fact mount a campaign on 'the issues'. He put forward a coherent programme, a Leftish version of Naderite populism. His most serious support came from Cesar Chavez's farm workers. Up to within a month of last Tuesday's primary he was running at only 15 per cent of the vote. On the day of the debate the margin separating him and Tunney had suddenly narrowed to 10 points. And in the debate, despite some of the knockabout moments mentioned above, Hayden did manage to enunciate coherently radical ideas – on health care, land holdings, nationalisation (as opposed to the old populist nostrum of trust-busting), military spending and foreign policy. Tunney, in response, put forward traditional centre-liberal, Democratic ideas. The result of the debate, attended with some eagerness in Southern California, was pronounced by the press to be a draw. When the voters finally got to the polls they went for Tunney by roughly 60-40. That result, given Hayden's provenance, was a very respectable showing, for Left ideas.

Now Hayden of course did have the advantage of Jane Fonda's assets and indeed of TV commercials by the iconographic president of the United States, Henry Fonda. (Tunney fought back with commercials from Gregory Peck.) There are not many radical candidates around the country with that sort of firepower. Nonetheless, in the year of the conservative candidate marching forward behind the buckler of his teeth, it is worth remembering that someone advocating an immediate 20-percent cut in the defence budget, among other views conventionally consigned to the unelectable fringe, gave Tunney the fright he did.

Apart from such unusual and diverting adventures on the Left, Californians performed a number of other interesting, if less rousing, manoeuvres at the polls. They rejected 'Proposition 15', the attempt to slow down the construction of nuclear plant in the state. Utilities and oil companies contributed $2,500,000 to ensure that victory for the nuclear industry and the vote will presumably have an effect in all the other states about to make similar decisions. The voters also turned out for Ronald Reagan and Jerry Brown in large numbers.

And with mention of these two expert politicians we of course find ourselves back in the business of inspecting the royal roads to both conventions. Much to the irritation of many journalists who regard a pleasant conclusion to the primary campaigns in the Californian sunshine as a privilege granted by God, it was established by consensus that in fact unlovely Ohio and New Jersey were of greater significance in the Democratic primary contest. In Ohio we had Mo Udall and Frank Church making their last efforts to stop Jimmy Carter. In New Jersey the fight was more complex. Between Carter and 'uncommitted delegate slates' pledged either to Hubert Humphrey or to Jerry Brown.

Over the last month the Stop Carter movement has been lurching along. In the last analysis its confused motions may turn out to have been beneficial for Carter, who might otherwise have reduced the electorate to irritated torpor as he made his deals and glided towards the finishing line. In Ohio the Stop Carter movement stopped dead, with the final extinction of Mo Udall and, indeed, of Frank Church, who was immobilised anyway by a sore throat and the dam disaster in his own state. Carter won all the delegates and the popularity vote by a vast margin.

In New Jersey the 'uncommitted' delegates just outnumbered those pledged to Carter. I watched Jerry Brown in Los Angeles announce this news and in ecstasies of optimism declare that the fight was not over. He is now hurrying about the country trying to sell himself and the new ideological (anti-Carter) minimalism to uncommitted delegates. Such hopes for him, for Hubert Humphrey, or even for Teddy Kennedy, grow dimmer. Last Tuesday Mayor Daley said that if Carter won in Ohio he would be the nominee. Mayor Daley controls over 60 delegates. Senator Henry Jackson, with over 200 delegates, is already talking about the vice-presidency with Carter. Carter already has over 1,100 out of the 1,505 delegates needed. As I remarked some weeks ago, deals with Jackson, Daley and Wallace will bring him near that number. Brown may want the presidency, and indeed has planned for over three years to win it, but, as one of his associates remarked to me this week, even Jerry knows well the average chances of a vice-president of winning promotion.

Republicans watch Carter's progress with ever-deepening gloom. The Democrats may yet spring at each other's throats in Madison Square Garden. The Republicans now seem certain to do so in Kansas City. President Ford is somewhat ahead of Ronald Reagan in delegate strength, but the race is close enough for them to insult each other with increasing ardour. Half the Republican Party hates Ford and the other half hates Reagan. It would still be wiser to bet on Ford, but only in the short-term sense that it was wiser to bet on Goldwater rather than Rockefeller in the convention in 1964.

Thus, with our backs to the Pacific, we can now look back on four months' worth of primaries. In that space of time a country only a year away from the war in Vietnam, with about 7 million unemployed people, in the wake of Nixon's dismissal and a turmoil in its security apparatus at home and abroad, has been asked, notably by Carter and Reagan, to inflate anew its sense of moral well-being and spiritual pugnacity. 'For God and country' has been the essential, if unstated, slogan. The dilemmas and actual options for the country, both at home and abroad, have been by-passed or distorted. With this in mind we can say, as pundits usually do at such moments, that the system works.

Los Angeles

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Murray Sayle

Sailor Off the Midway

For years, it's been all go in the international espionage business in Tokyo. The dark, twisted alleys lit by mysterious paper lanterns, the 10,000 discreet bars and clubs of the Oriental megapolis offer ideal working conditions. With Japan now the main base for US naval operations in the Western Pacific, the indispensable support area for the 'United Nations' (American) garrison in South Korea and, from a Russian viewpoint, the weakest link in the hostile combination arrayed around the borders of the Soviet Union, there is no shortage of assignments. And, with détente steadily raising world tensions, the spying business has never been so brisk.

The CIA, out here in strength, reputedly occupies two whole windowless floors of the new US Embassy. The Russians do regular milk-runs up and down the coast of Japan in TU 95 'Bear' bombers, taking oblique photographs, and their 'trawlers' gate-crash every exercise of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defence Force (navy) with radar antennae flapping. The US Naval Intelligence Service keeps an eye on American civilians and other dubious elements acting suspiciously around US Navy bases, particularly Yokosuka, the home port of the American attack aircraft carrier USS *Midway*. The US Army G2 section still runs a China-watch and keeps files on Japanese radicals and other miscreants, in temporary buildings put up in MacArthur's time and staffed by relays of bright young college graduates ever since.

Then we have both real Chinese and Taiwan intelligence men, and both kinds of Koreans – the South Korean Central Intelligence Agency brazenly kidnapped opposition leader Kim Dee Jung, now on trial for his life in Seoul, from a Tokyo street in broad daylight. The Japanese themselves try to gather as much intelligence as they can, in a quiet way, through an M15-style agency discreetly called the Cabinet Intelligence Room.

But it has been difficult for the Japanese to do anything about their flourishing spy trade. Strictly speaking, according to Article 9 of their Constitution ('land, sea and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained') they are not supposed to have a navy, or an army, or an air force, either; it is tricky to build a legal case against someone spying on what is not supposed to exist. And a tacit understanding attached to the American use of bases here is that a minimum of offence should be given to the Russians, who themselves have military bases on four small islands seized as war booty from Japan at the end of World War II, and only five miles off the northern Japanese coast. Thus, Japan was allowed to get by with only a tiny secret participation in the Korean War, while their contribution in Vietnam was limited to selling Hondas to both sides.

As a result, spying in Japan used to be a relaxed, risk-free job; in 30 years no Russian, and naturally no American, had ever been arrested for spying, let alone seen the inside of prison. That was, until a rainy Wednesday night last month, when two foreigners coming out of a noodle-house in Ikebukuro, a seedy section of Tokyo well off the glossy tourist circuit, were stopped by agents of the counter-intelligence section of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police and asked to show their alien registration cards.

One produced papers identifying him as Petty Officer Michael Schmidt of the USS *Midway*, later said to be a low-level electronics and signals man. The other made a bolt for it. But Japanese policemen can run faster than burly, 38-year old Russian journalists, especially after dinner. After a scuffle apparently including a few karate chops around the head and shoulders (later described by the Soviet Embassy as 'a brutal beating') the agents escorted Aleksandr Matchekhin, correspondent of the Novosti Press Agency, to a holding cell at the Tokyo Metropolitan Police HQ, known to Japanese as the 'pig box'.

According to the long-established ground rules, he might have expected a free ride to Tokyo airport and a seat on the first plane to Moscow. But that is not what happened to A. Matchekhin. Three days after his arrest, the Tokyo police called an unprecedented press conference and let it all hang out, with no nonsense about sub judice or the rules of evidence. Matchekhin, they said, was no newsman, but a middle-grade officer of the GRU, the Soviet General Staff intelligence section.

A hardened spy, with previous experience in Bangkok (according to the Japanese police), the Russian had spent $1,500 buying meals for the American sailor and his family, which might not, at Tokyo prices, indicate all that close a relationship. However, said the police, Matchekhin had not filed a news story since he arrived in Tokyo in October 1974, and on the night of his arrest, he had offered Schmidt $1,000 per item for classified information on the *Midway*'s radar, airborne electronics and communications systems. No, the American had not actually sold or passed any secret info., and he had not been arrested. The police said they proposed to charge Matchekhin under an obscure section of the US-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, never before invoked, which provides a maximum of ten years in the pig-box for collecting US military information in Japan, and five years for an attempt.

The official Russians in Tokyo were furious (the new Soviet Ambassador had presented his credentials the same day as the police disclosures) and threatened 'serious consequences'. Matchekhin went on a hunger strike, and Japanese correspondents in Tokyo began checking the booking on the trans-Siberian railway. But the Tokyo police kept the story going, leaking suspicious details from Matchekhin's notebook (jottings *in Russian*, would you believe, and 'unnaturally few' telephone numbers). Then, after ten days inside, and the maximum Japanese media mileage out of the case, Matchekhin was released. He dallied only long enough to settle his bar bill at the Tokyo Foreign Correspondents' Club, where he was a well-liked, if not over-clubbable member, and huffily caught the next Aeroflot plane home. A Japanese police 'observer' repeated that he was still a GRU man, that he had been released out of 'diplomatic considerations', and that his case would serve as a good warning against any more spying activities by the Soviet Union in Japan.

The curious incident, made more curious by the David-defies-Goliath finale, became even more intriguing when the official Americans let it be known that they were against any show trials of alleged Russian spies in Tokyo, would not make their man available as a witness, and had pressured the Japanese until they let Matchekhin go. A strong suspicion that the Japanese had blundered into an American operation, and that the aptly named Schmidt had in fact been spying on the Russian, gripped many of the remaining drinkers at the Press Club. This suspicion is somewhat supported by the true facts of life at sea in the Western Pacific.

You don't have to buy anyone *sukiyaki* to

Roger Woddis

Nice One, Jimmy

Saudi Arabia has given Jimmy Hill £25m. to boost its football to world-class standards.

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Who will deny him
The right to feel pecker?
Coventry's favourite son,
Down on his knees and bowing
to Mecca.

Oh, you may laugh if you will,
But this must be news
Our government's pleased at;
The Saudis are footing the bill
And 25 million's not to be sneezed at.

Anything's possible now.
Iceland may beg us
To teach them the two-step;
Israel may want to know how
They can improve their skill at
the goosestep.

China may put in a bid,
Money no object,
For coaching in cricket;
There may be a call from Madrid,
Asking for those who know how
to picket.

Though we are down to the bone,
Don't panic, brothers,
We're counting on Denis
To pay off the 'Group of Ten' loan
By teaching the Swiss to sparkle
at tennis.

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BRITISH GAS

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discover that the *Midway* is a 51,000-ton museum piece, laid down, according to *Jane's Fighting Ships*, in October 1943 and launched in March 1945. The Americans built a solid ship back in the days of zoot suits, Glenn Miller and wind-up gramophones, and she was even fairly manoeuvrable when she was launching Hellcats and Tomahawks. But now, just to recover her jet Phantoms (itself a 1955 aircraft) she has to steam in as straight a line as the old dear can manage for 15 miles, a sitting duck for a passing submarine.

The Russians are now deploying 120 submarines in the Western Pacific, 48 at sea at any one time, at least ten of these nuclear. It was submarines, it will be recalled, not MacArthur's island-hopping or the nuclear *Götterdämmerung* which sank the Japanese merchant fleet and any chance Japan might have had of winning the last time round. What stops the Russians doing the same thing, if détente should get too hot, or they disliked the look of a Chinese-Japanese-US gang-up against them?

In fact, as things stand, very little, and there is no secret about this, either. The Japanese with their own current naval resources could not escort a convoy of tankers from Singapore, let alone the Middle East. There are a couple of US divisions in Korea, and a regiment of marines on Okinawa, who, when they tire of storming their local beaches, occasionally take landing ships over to South Korea and practise doing their thing on the beaches there, irritating the Chinese, enraging Kim Il Sung and suggesting that the grand Old Duke of York may have been re-activated as a marine general. In short, as the *Midway*'s age suggests, the US is well prepared to fight World War II all over again in the Pacific, with equipment mostly from around that period.

The Japanese defence planners knew, of course, that *Midway* was a grey elephant, but until a year or so ago her mere presence was comforting. She carries Phantoms, *ne*? And Phantoms carry nuclear weapons, *so desu*? So as long as *Midway* is in Tokyo Bay, we get free nuclear protection, *so desu ne*? *Ah, so*! But this comforting and economical policy hardly survived Vietnam. If the Americans were unwilling to use nuclear weapons to save Thieu, are they any more likely to employ them to save Park Chung-Hee of South Korea, Takeo Miki of Japan, or, come to that, Mao Tse-tung?

From the viewpoint of the Japanese defence planners and the political Right, the old girl by herself then simply isn't good enough. They are increasingly jumpy about the vulnerability of Japanese sea-borne trade, and well aware that the United States is not going to risk a nuclear super-carrier to escort a cargo of Hondas and Toyotas and cheap tin trays. If the Japanese want to take sides in the world, they will have to pay for some of their own defence at sea.

What better way to get the taxpayers in the mood, in a Japanese as well as an American election year, than a bit of street theatre outside a noodle house in Tokyo and a good, old-fashioned Red spy scare?

Tokyo

Yvonne Roberts

A Common Way of Life

Laura's room is on the first floor. It is unheated, as are the rest of the rooms in the four-storey building above ground level. And without carpets. Her bed is lumpy and when the covers are pulled back, collections of possessions are piled like a mole's track across the bed. Most of the 67 women who use this house either carry their belongings permanently with them or heap them under and on top of their beds. Laura shares her room with seven others, a breathing space between each person, but when she wants 'real' company, she descends to the basement and the three sparsely furnished common rooms cum kitchens. These rooms are heated by coke fires installed when the building was first constructed nearly 100 years ago. The flues are blocked and the atmosphere in the rooms is poisonous. So much so that a party of schoolchildren who volunteered to paint the rooms had to be refused. The atmosphere, it was decided, would cause them physical harm.

The women don't notice the fumes now. Many of them have been there too long to care, five, ten and even 20 years. In any case, they need the fires to cook on as well as to keep warm. Most of the women wash in the kitchen too. The alternative is the ablutions block in the backyard. It has eight washbasins, four deep sinks, a stone floor, a bath that has never been used and cold water. Washing in the kitchen is against the rules but if you don't mind the audience, Laura says, it's one rule that can be broken. For all this, Laura pays 60p a night, £4.20 a week. Her address is 76-78 Camberwell Road, London SE16. But what she never adds is that this address in Southwark is the address of a Common Lodging House.

Common lodging houses have been in use in this country since the beginning of the 19th century. The destitute with a penny could find a bed for the night in the worst of the kind; the mobile labour force needed to build the railways and the canals in the cities paid a little more for something relatively better. 'For almost every town and country whence sanitary reports have been received . . . the common lodging houses are pointed out as foci of contagious disease . . .' Edwin Chadwick wrote in 1838, when there were probably about 70,000 people living in such conditions. A century later, Orwell found the price had increased to fourpence for a 'coffin' – a wooden box, a tarpaulin and the bugs free, the courtesy of the previous resident – but the filth and overcrowding were the same. Nowadays, the better class of lodging house is provided by the Salvation Army and Church Army, the least savoury by the private owner, and the price ranges from 50p to treble that. In theory, all common lodging houses should be registered with the relevant local authority. In practice, as a government survey carried out in 1972 but only published this year, revealed, over 60 per cent of the properties visited were not registered, or the owners were unsure if they were. So, although the number of beds in this, the cheapest sector of the housing market, stands officially at a little over 30,000, it's quite likely that that figure could be double if one took into consideration the myriads of transport cafés and large private houses offering a dozen or so working men and women a couple of rooms to let.

The difficulty in trying to regulate conditions in common lodging houses such as the one in Southwark is twofold. First, there is the problem of finding them. If a lodging house is *not* registered, it may still be known to the local authorities as a house in multiple occupation – a category with a more stringent set of standards. But even houses in multiple occupation may escape the eye of the Environmental Health Officers. Southwark has a team of three such officers. It needs five. There are 13,000 houses in multiple occupation known in the area and, at present, it would take the team of three 15 years to visit them all. So, inevitably, some overcrowded properties slip through the net.

Secondly, when a registered common lodging house – and there are seven others in Southwark – *is* found to be sub-standard (the government survey condemned over 70 per cent of the properties as being inadequate in one form or another), such is the weakness of the existing legislation that there is little even a *willing* local authority can do to achieve any lasting improvement.

The definition of a common lodging house was laid down in the 1936 Public Health Act. It is:

> . . . a house provided for the purpose of accommodating by night *poor* persons not being members of the same family, who report thereto and are allowed to occupy one common room for the purpose of sleeping and eating . . .

In 1936, one presumes, there was a clearer idea of who was eligible for the tag 'poor person'. Today, certainly, the label is less easy to apply. Laura, for example, is a waitress in a private members' club. She earns less than £30 a week. She came to Camberwell Road 18 months ago because she couldn't afford the £10 and £12 a week being asked for bedsitters. At 59, she wasn't prepared to squat and she didn't think, as a single person, she would stand much chance of council accommodation. So she moved into No 76. She found herself surrounded by a mix of people not untypical of many to be seen in common lodging houses today.

The majority of the 67 women in the house are old-age pensioners. Some are ladies who divorced in middle age and had nowhere else to go. Others had been released from hospital and referred to Camberwell Road by the authorities because they had no previous address. A few, one woman in her nineties for instance, had simply been 'forgotten' by their families,

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who thought they were dead and were in no hurry to find out otherwise. The remaining third of the residents are ladies like Laura. Women one would sit next to on the bus and not notice. They are in work, usually earning low wages and maintaining steady employment in the face of permanent housing worries. Only a tiny minority of the women in Camberwell Road, social workers involved in the property insist, are the type most usually associated with the dosshouse. The regular occupants of park benches clutching a bottle and the mentally sick who – to the disgrace of the welfare state – have been released from psychiatric hospitals into the harshness of common lodging houses. 'A lot of us here,' says Laura, 'never in our wildest dreams believed it could happen to us. But it did.'

In February this year, Southwark's Labour-controlled council decided to take action on the house. The council had been playing a game of 'Call My Bluff' for ten years with the owner – a woman living in France and alleged to be collecting £16,000 a year in rents. The council would threaten to take the owner to court, the owner would counter with a threat to close the property down and evict the women. Southwark wasn't able, it felt at that time, to cope with 67 homeless single women, so conditions in the house deteriorated even further. Even if the Council *had* decided to prosecute, the effect would have been minimal because the official definition of a common lodging house isn't the only anachronism on the books.

Common lodging houses are regulated by a set of model by-laws first passed by the London County Council in 1902 and specifically designed to stop the spread of disease. In fact, they establish a far lower standard of hygiene than in any other form of housing. Among the by-laws is the stipulation that a keeper should clean the property completely in the first week in April and October. (It took a three-ton lorry to clear the débris of a decade of previous residents from Camberwell Road.) Also, all bedding should be clean and free from vermin. (A lady ill with terminal cancer at Camberwell Road had not slept in her bed for three years. The mice moved in to take her place.) A contravention of the by-laws would result, usually, in a minimum fine of £5 or £10. Alternatively, a council can refuse to renew the licence of a common lodging house when the property is re-registered annually. But, again, this might bring the likelihood of mass eviction too close for comfort. So, the local authority, in reality, has the choice of a token fine – or inaction.

A higher set of standards applies to houses in multiple occupation (what is acceptable for the 'poor' in lodging houses is apparently not suitable for the great mass sleeping elsewhere) but, more importantly, a council can take effective action on an HMO (house in multiple occupation) by using a Control Order. A Control Order allows the council to manage and modernise a property for a five-year period. Southwark is now in process of appointing a management committee: ten women are likely to be rehoused from Camberwell Road and a Housing Visitor is now in regular attendance. Improvements are slowly beginning to be made but the cost of a bed for the

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night should be unaffected and the continution of this necessary source of cheap accommodation will be ensured.

The use of a Control Order to improve standards in both common lodging houses and HMOs appears, at first sight, to be a fairly efficient instrument. But the fact that fewer than two dozen have been imposed in this country in 12 years is not without reason. First, there is the lack of will. 'Many local authorities,' explained one social worker, 'believe that this type of accommodation is used by the dregs. People who aren't socially acceptable won't kick up a fuss and therefore aren't worth bothering about. In fact, more and more of the people in lodging houses and the like are like me and you.'

Even if the determination *is* there, a Control Order can only be used in a case like Camberwell Road when the lodging house licence *has* lapsed. And, even then, it requires a little imagination on the part of the local authorities. Moreover, a Control Order carries the now familiar risk that, should the owner successfully appeal against it, the property may be closed down and a valuable source of cheap accommodation will be lost. 'We took the risk,' explained one of Southwark's housing officials, 'because we were also prepared to take the consequences of rehousing anyone who might be evicted if we failed. But that,' he adds, 'is by no means a common attitude. In fact, the threat is enough of an excuse to put most local authorities off any action. Let's face it, there *is* no adequate control on the rock-bottom end of the housing market. And as far as most of us are concerned, sadly, the reaction seems to be – who cares?'

R. H. Tawney

Labour and Honours

I suppose that members of the Labour Party were too stunned by the honour conferred on it a fortnight ago, in the shape of the knighthood bestowed on its Chief Whip, to give immediate expression to the joyful emotions which, no doubt, they felt. Having now begun to sit up and take nourishment, I feel moved to break the awed silence with convalescent whispers.

I have not the acquaintance of the gentleman in question, nor as an individual does he concern me. For all I know he may have consulted the Executive of the party as to the propriety of his action, and, in any case, he has only done what others have done before him. It is not, therefore, as a person but as a symbol that I refer to him. Still less do I venture to comment on the taste shown by his fellows-in-glory of the trade union movement. If trade unionists think that their officials will serve them best by dressing up in the livery of their inveterate opponents, one may regard that opinion as eccentric, but their eccentricities are their own business. But the conduct of the Chief Whip is not merely an individual matter. He is an honorary official of the Parliamentary Party; and, whatever fine distinctions may be drawn between his personal and public capacities, in a matter of this kind the two cannot be separated. So at the risk of distracting the Executive in its task of drafting for the next conference resolutions of congratulation to Sir Charles Edwards on his promotion, and of gratitude to the Government for its condescension in bestowing on the party a certificate of its approval, I should like to ask a few ill-mannered questions.

For a good many years the Labour Party has been in the habit of stating in its programmes and on public platforms that it stands for social equality. Has it jettisoned that article in its creed as too embarrassing electoral luggage? Or does it suppose that it will convert the public to a belief in equality, if it does not, in its heart, believe in itself? And does it expect to persuade them of the genuineness of its convictions, if prominent members of the party sit up, like poodles in a drawing-room, wag their tails when patted, and lick their lips at the social sugar-plums tossed them by their masters? It has told the workers again and again that their strength is in solidarity, and that they must advance together, or not at all. Are they likely to believe it, if they see one of the honorary officers of the party created to fight their battles accepting a knighthood from a government the very initiation of which has been repeatedly denounced by his colleagues as an odious piece of treachery to the workers' cause?

This article originally appeared (as a letter) in the NEW STATESMAN *of 22 June 1935. Labour's Chief Whip in the Commons, Charles Edwards, and the general secretary of the TUC, Walter Citrine, had each recently accepted knighthoods – provoking this protest from the author of* Equality, *who himself had already flatly turned down the offer of an honour from Ramsay MacDonald.*

It has declared that it is committed to an uncompromising struggle with the plutocracy and all its works. Then why stick in its hair the very feathers which the plutocracy in its more imbecile moments, loves to wear in its own? There may well be a case for distinctions conferred as recognised steps in an official career, for example on civil servants. But those accepted in recent years by some leaders of the Labour movement are hardly in that category. The truth is, that the whole business of political honours stinks – stinks of snobbery, of the money for which, unless rumour is wholly misleading, a good many of them are sold, of the servile respect for wealth and social position which remains even today the characteristic and contemptible vice of large numbers of our fellow countrymen. It is precisely these things which are among the principal obstacles in the path of the Labour Party. Why on earth does it go out of its way to strengthen their pernicious influence by allowing, without a murmur, its members to do obeisance to them?

I am told that titles are a trifle, and that it is absurd to make a fuss about them. If they are such a trifle, why does anyone desire them? But they are not. Those who think that the acceptance of them does no harm have been mixing too long with blasé politicians. They should attend their local Labour Parties, and listen for a change to the views of ordinary men and women. I know, of course, that the members of the party who have refused 'honours' are a good deal more numerous than those who have accepted them, and that fact should be remembered. The stuff, apparently, is hawked round, and sensible men, when they catch a whiff of it, tell the vendor for the Lord's sake to take it farther up the street. But the public cannot know that. All it sees is that some Labour politicians denounce the social system in one breath, and in the next behave as though they were on their knees before it. The conclusion it draws from the spectacle, and quite inevitably draws, is that Labour politicians are on the make to the same degree as other politicians, and that their full-mouthed indignation at social inequalities is vociferous cant.

I am told again that, though the thing is admittedly nauseous, it can't be helped. It is true, of course, that Privy Councillorships are not to be avoided, and that, as long as the House of Lords exists, the Labour Party must have members in it. That is a good reason why a Labour government should make Privy Councillors and peers in the number required to get its work done, and members of the party who have accepted for that reason the positions in question have laid the movement under an obligation. But, however singular the British Constitution may be, it does not yet contain a Chamber of Knights – though, at the present rate, it soon may, or require that, before a man can become a minister, he should prepare himself for his responsibilities by attaching to his name a prescribed percentage of the alphabet.

If the only case for 'honours' is the practical one, it seems pretty easy to meet. Let the next party conference lay down (1) that no member of the party shall accept adornments of the kind except from a Labour government, (2) that no Labour government shall confer any 'honours' except such as are essential in order to enable it to do the job for which it was given power. Were that course adopted, a Labour government would remain free to recommend the creation of such peers and Privy Councillors as it required. But we should see less of the humiliating business of Labour members succumbing, however undesignedly, to the blandishments of a social system which the Labour Party is pledged to do its utmost to wind up.

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London Diary

☐ There couldn't have been a better illustration of the contrast between the Harold and Jim Shows than that provided by the events of the past week. In 1964, after all, we also got a stand-by credit – $3,000m. to be exact: last Monday it was $5,300m. (no doubt reflecting inflation). But what a difference in the surrounding atmosphere. November 1964 all was energy and urgency – hectic meetings at Chequers, a melodramatic trip by the Prime Minister's private secretary to Washington, Mr Wilson himself intervening in a defence debate to dwell on the threat to the British economy; there was also, as we now know, at least one angry confrontation in Number 10 between the Governor of the Bank of England and the head of the British Government. Nothing remotely of that sort happened on this occasion. Instead it wasn't until last Friday that Jim Callaghan was eventually prevailed upon to trundle up from Sussex for the day, only returning to London on Sunday night to attend an agreeable evening party given by his son-in-law on HMS *Belfast*. His mood there seemed totally imperturbable and he wasn't even to be found in the House of Commons on Monday afternoon when the Chancellor made his announcement – although he did pop in later that same evening to listen nonchalantly to the proceedings on the Police Bill. What was that remark of Ted Heath's about Jim Callaghan making Dixon of Dock Green look like 'a live wire'? Perhaps the one thing Ted forgot – and Jim constantly remembers – is that for the past 21 years Dixon has been a great British folk hero.

☐ The fact that Harold Wilson, all passion spent, is to be installed next Monday as a Knight of the Garter has, I had better admit, something to do with our decision to republish this week R. H. Tawney's splendid philippic against the honours system that appears on the opposite page. We frankly hoped it would strike a chord somewhere – if not within St George's Chapel, Windsor, then perhaps just conceivably inside Number 10. It's always said, of course, that Harold Macmillan has set the example for ex-prime ministers. Without at all wishing to detract from the value of his unadorned witness, I'm surprised no one has pointed out that the Labour movement, too, has its exemplar in these matters. There have, after all, been – apart from Callaghan – three Labour prime ministers. One was Attlee, who became an earl, the next was Wilson, whom we see in royal blue on Monday: what about the third? He, of course, was Ramsay MacDonald and, whatever else may be said against poor old 'Ramshackle', at least he lived and died a commoner.

☐ Electoral reform has always ranked as a journalistic subject somewhere alongside fluoridation and anti-vivisection: that is to say, while of passionate interest to a minority, it tends to leave the bulk of readers not only cold but numb. Will all that now change? The Hansard Society, whose Commission Report came out this week, is understandably delighted with the way the BBC pushed the boat out for them. The hour and ten minutes the subject got on BBC-1 last Wednesday night was a good deal more lavish treatment than the governing party of the country itself got for Labour's Programme 1976 just two weeks ago. But to say that is not necessarily to cavil: it is merely to indicate that reforming our electoral system looks suspiciously as if it has now become the new 'Establishment' cause. The report itself is certainly a worth-while document, not least in its historical section (did you know that in 1931 the then Labour Government actually got an Alternative Vote Bill through the House of Commons, only to see it defeated in the House of Lords?). But I cannot believe that the report's final recommendation is the right one. What the Hansard Commission, headed by Lord Blake, comes out for is a House of Commons of 640 MPs – of whom 480 will be elected by constituencies as at present and the remaining 160 chosen as 'additional Members' representing 12 regional areas of the country. Who will these 160 'new model' MPs be? Why, none other than the top defeated candidates of the parties who have failed to get 'fair' representation in the various specified areas. It's certainly ingenious but not, I fancy, convincing. The net result of any such scheme could, after all, only be to turn the House of Commons into a two-class vessel – with some Members wandering the veranda deck and others (the new regional MPs actually turned down by constituencies) travelling steerage.

☐ Jimmy Cochrane's trial for corrupt business practices made the Glasgow Sheriff's court a more than usually bright place in the last few weeks, and actually increased the sales of newspapers as the punters flocked to read of Anna Grunt pleasuring officials of the NCB ('Was he bald?' 'I don't remember'). Apart from the fact that the lady's name is Grant, but a mis-spelling on the indictment renamed her for the duration, I can think of only one point that might have been made amid all the hilarity. The heads of Shell and BP have both been accused of supplying Italian politicians with rather more than blonde models lately. Questioned about it, the chairman of BP told his shareholders: 'Contributions were made not only by the other oil companies but, as I understand it, by other industries and companies generally in Italy. Against this background, we concluded we had no option but to make the payments.' The Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Joel Barnett, echoed the 'everybody's doing it' line in the House of Commons last month. So poor old Jimmy Cochrane does a year in Barlinnie and reflects on the maxim 'export or go to jail'.

☐ I wouldn't have missed for worlds the foretaste I was allowed this week of an excellent political programme Granada is putting out this Sunday morning. It's part of their *State of the Nation* series and is all about the strange death of Labour's manifesto proposal 12 years ago for a 'Land Commission'. Perhaps, however, the 'death' wasn't so strange after all: for if I carried away one impression from my advance viewing, it is that the civil service still has it in its power to strangle at birth any reform to which it is opposed. To discuss just what happened to this particular election commitment Granada resourcefully assemble the three main surviving protagonists in the drama – Fred Willey, Labour's ill-fated Minister of Land and Natural Resources, Sir Frederick Bishop, his former permanent secretary and Baroness Sharp, the then Czarina of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Anyone who still believes that civil servants simply exist to offer ministers advice will find that Baroness Sharp's demeanour throughout repays careful study. I especially enjoyed her ministerial formulation *'my* officials and, I think, Mr Willey's officials'. But on balance I loved best of all the small ladylike yawn that she seems to permit herself just as poor Mr Willey is trying to develop what he clearly regards as an important argument.

☐ At least since 1964, when we lost the chairman of our Board, our parliamentary adviser and our resident economist all at one fell swoop, the traffic between Great Turnstile and the Government has tended to be in the opposite direction. Dick Crossman began the procession back in 1970 – and vigilant readers may have noticed ex-ministers following in his wake in recent weeks. But there's a lot to be said for the two-way flow of ideas – and though it's a matter of sadness for us that Elizabeth Thomas leaves the NS this week, it's in many ways a cause for reassurance that from next Monday the Government will have her wisdom and counsel at its disposal. After nearly five years with the NS Liz is departing to become Michael Foot's 'special adviser': no doubt in a week or two she will be regarding us with much that same mixture of irritation and pain that always seems to characterise government reactions to the NS. But, for our part, she will remain a friend first – and an adversary only, we hope, on few and fleeting occasions.

Crucifer

This England

Prizes: £1.50 book token for first entry, £1 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ City elders in Bristol were accused yesterday of falling asleep while vetting 'X' films containing 'horrific scenes of sex and violence'. Mrs Gloria Brass, 49, a Labour councillor who has three teenage sons, complained that fellow councillors on the civic film censor committee often dozed off during special showings when they were supposed to be deciding whether films were fit for the rest of the city's public to see. – *Daily Telegraph* (P. O'R. Smiley)

☐ A security firm has been hired by a group of Pembrokeshire farmers to guard their potato fields. Uniformed security men and their dogs will begin duty on Monday. The farmers fear raids on their early potatoes because of the increase in potato prices. – *The Times* (Douglas Munro)

☐ Watching Shirley Williams on TV I noticed that she wears rather short dresses showing a nice pair of legs. Margaret Thatcher should do likewise. It would help many floating voters to make up their minds. – Letter in *Evening News* (Leon Drucker)

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Tom Baistow

U Too, A.J.P.?

As an old admirer of A. J. P. Taylor I feel I would be lacking in gratitude for all the pleasure his scholarship and writing have given me over the years if I didn't pick up the coat he trailed – with more vigour than panache perhaps – in last week's London Diary. And as a native of North Britain – we are, of course, notoriously lacking, like other foreigners, in a real (i.e. English) sense of humour – I am in duty bound, like a good stereotype, to take his 'Scotch' teasing seriously. So here goes.

In fact I couldn't care less if he insisted on calling my country Scotchland, which would be its logical name if his etymology were as good as his historiography – although I think it would be a good idea, for more than sentimental reasons, to revert to its original (and still its Gaelic) name: Albann. For a start it would give the new Scotland not merely a psychological clean sheet but pride of place, before Bahrain, at Opec meetings. However, I quite agree with him that Scots who can pass the shall/should test are rare – as rare as the English, of any class, who can differentiate between the past tense and the past participle of strong verbs like swim and sing. No, what saddens me about his pose as a latter-day Sam Johnson is that he reveals himself to be such a roaring Tory-type snob. (After all, Johnson in his famous definitions was merely pandering to the general prejudice against the horde of ambitious Scots who had discovered after the Union that the high road to England was paved with golden opportunities that the easy-going English hadn't noticed or bothered to exploit. Now that the Union is about to be partially dissolved Taylor should surely be humouring my touchy countrymen, encouraging them to stay put at the northern end of that well-trodden high road.)

The paradox is that Taylor, the staunch socialist from my favourite English county, democratic, friendly, unsnooty Lancashire, seems in his long sojourn in Oxford and Hampstead to have absorbed the very Establishment attitudes he has castigated with such effect in the past. As he says, the English may no longer have the imperial clout to hang on to the treasures looted from the rest of the world, but there is in his tone faint but disconcerting echoes of the days when the one luxury all classes derived from the exploitation of the Empire was the freedom to give the world's lesser breeds any name they chose, however offensive – darkies, niggers, wogs, Yids, Micks, Frogs, Huns, bog-trotters, haggis-bashers, dagoes, Chinks, Japs, Kaffirs and the like.

Now Taylor, as a historian, must know that the one saw that needs to be rewritten in this age of mass communications is the one that asserts 'Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me'. Name calling is as old as society and I'm sure he doesn't need to be reminded that the most primitive national groupings built it into their tribal PR: the Germanic tribes (who else?) called themselves The People and their eastern neighbours the Slaves. Those neighbours called themselves the Intelligible Men and the Germans the Dumb Men. And we know where that led. Today, more than ever, the snide epithet, or even the refusal to call a group what it calls itself, leaves a scar that stings long after the black eye or the bruised ribs have ceased to ache. So surely if a national group wants to be known as Zimbabweans instead of (black) Rhodesians, Sri Lankhans instead of Sinhalese, Euscaldunac instead of Basques, or Scots instead of Scotchmen, good manners alone, if not respect for the prickly *amour propre* of minorities, demand that the change be accepted publicly with as much grace as possible, whatever the private reservations that a rose by any other name etc.

So much for the chauvinism that seems to be growing in England in inverse proportion to the value of sterling. More depressing than Taylor's Little Englander view of the Scots, however, is the social snobbery implicit in the source he quotes to support his strictures: 'Two Scotchmen of ancient family recently told me that Scots and Scottish were middle-class genteelisms on a par with "toilet".' For one thing, 'ancient family', a forelock-touching usage if ever there was one, means in plain English 'upper class', which in Scotland means someone who has been to an English public school. In short, it is rather like citing a New South Wales sheep baron as an authority on the Manchester accent. But consider the implication of that word 'genteelism'. Here Taylor, the blunt-spoken, no-nonsense, down to earth Northern man of the people exposes himself as a practitioner of that silly and socially divisive class dialect, U-speech.

It all began with Professor Alan Ross's 'Linguistic Class Indicators in Present-day English', a fascinating, erudite and factual paper which appeared in 1954 in the Finnish philological periodical *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*. Ross's essay was a perfectly scholarly study in sociological linguistics, but it contained one fatal phrase that was to rouse the worst instincts of the English middle classes: 'It is solely by its language,' said the professor, 'that the upper class is clearly marked off from the others.' And he revealed a list of the magic litmus words that distinguish the high-born from the rest of us. This U-vocabulary might well have remained as secret as hieratic Sumerian to all but a few of his fellow philologists if that professional aristocrat (well, Daddy was a *second* baron) Nancy Mitford hadn't spotted this wonderful vein of oneupmanship and trailed her ermine in an *Encounter* piece that was as wickedly provocative as it was arrogant. 'Silence,' she decreed, 'is the only possible U-response to many embarrassing modern situations: the ejaculation of "cheers" before drinking, for example, or "It was nice seeing you" after saying goodbye' and so on.

That was exactly 20 years ago and the Hampsteaders of England have never been quite the same since. It has not been easy, remembering that there must be no more *cycling*, playing golf, going *horse* riding, using *note*paper, having a *sweet* after dinner, begging anyone's *pardon*, retiring to the *lounge*, *taking* a bath, being *ill*, having a *lovely home*, leaning against the *mantelpiece* or even going to the *toilet*.

Which brings us back to Dr Taylor – one hopes that he as scrupulously eschews that older, Victorian euphemism 'lavatory' and uses the more accurate water closet. But Miss Mitford (the Hon. Mrs Peter Rodd actually) didn't provide merely a handy set of domestic indicators for tinkers, Taylors, soldiers, sailors and communicators anxious to improve their status, verbally at least; there were nuances with wider political significance. For those going North for the shooting, stalking and fishing (no one would travel that far simply for something as vulgar as sight-seeing) she warned potential house-party guests that '*Scottish* is non-U for U Scotch'. 'I have a game I play with all printers. I write Scotch, it appears on the proofs as Scottish. I correct it back to Scotch.' There's real class for you.

And, of course, she pointed out to the suburban innocents that '*Britain* is non-U for U England'. Which would seem to be as prophetic as it was honest. However, dear Mrs Rodd is now dead and surely it's time Hampstead buried all the pretentious and pathetic U-nonsense too. Perhaps if A.J.P. thinks again and gives up calling us Scotch the Scottish Race Relations Board, come independence, will respond by banning the use of 'Sassenach', a (mis-spelt) Gaelic word that simply means Englishman but carries its own load of nuances – class-conscious, idle, bovine, indifferently educated, unconsciously arrogant but easy to get along with and *quite nice* on the whole.

First Person

Arthur Marshall

Fire Down Below

Some years ago in London, when revues still flourished in Shaftesbury Avenue, there was one with an item called 'Human Stories', a succession of short vignettes from everyday life. At one point there entered a lady of mature years, her face liberally dotted with acne and wearing a shapeless macintosh. She shuffled tipsily forward and spoke: 'All my life I've suffered from these disfiguring spots on my face. I had tried every known remedy, all to no avail, until one day a helpful friend advised me to drink as much whisky as I could. This I've been doing.' (*Loud hiccough*). 'As you can

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see, I've still got the spots, but now I don't give a damn.'

It would have been better for her health had she written to Marjorie Proops (impossible to think of the warm-hearted creature as anything but 'Marje') of the *Daily Mirror*, the kindest, wisest and rightly most famous of advice columnists, now revealing in *Dear Marje* (André Deutsch, £2.95) what it has felt like over the last 20 years to cope as best she could with well over a million cries for help, not all them about sex. Indeed, her readers have expected her to be a cornucopia of information on every imaginable subject. Should one wear long gloves at a cocktail party? What is a good recipe for yoghurt? If a neighbour 'suggests a deodorant' should one cut her dead? Where is the best place to learn belly-dancing? Should a girl get anxious if her boy friend keeps trying on her corsets? 'One day, even, an hysterical woman rang to say she'd found her husband having intercourse with their dog.'

She started her dazzling career in commercial art and was then invited by a perceptive editor to try her hand at journalism ('I rushed back to Stoke Poges and wrote 1,000 words'), and now a bright, happy, gig-lamped and successful face gazes contentedly at us from the dust jacket. Her mail has seasonal fluctuations. July and August are quiet times, ditto December. January and February, when pockets are empty and spirits low, are the peak periods for wives to be abandoned by their husbands. September and October are busy months with the first results of holiday indiscretions beginning to show ('I met this Spanish waiter and he said he loved me'). The tone of the correspondence has, over the years, become less inhibited. 'Questions about orgasms are now as commonplace as complaints about mothers-in-law.' Working closely with the NSPCC, the Samaritans, Alcoholics Anonymous, Citizens' Advice Bureaux and so on ('I have found the police enormously cooperative in cases of incest') the job is really no joke. 'It is a fearful responsibility and I am constantly aware of it.'

And it is, of course, sex that causes most trouble, and here we find Marje at her very best. Her goal is a simple one. True happiness for all, no matter what unusual form it takes, and her colours, flying high, are nailed to the mast. If a chap only gets frisky at the sight of a suspender-belt and high-heeled shoes, don't be a spoil-sport: just pop them on and what's the harm in that? Everywhere there is encouragement to get happily on with it, and women who talk of 'submitting', odious verb, to their husbands or who, indifferent, try to discourage marital overtures, meet with her strong disapproval firmly expressed:

> Your boredom with sex is pathetic and your age is neither reason nor excuse for it. At 43, you should be at the top of your sexual form, eagerly looking forward to love-making instead of restricting your husband to a once-a-week ration. It's a wonder you haven't issued him with coupons.

With the shy, Marje is all sympathy, advising cosy 'touching' sessions and thoughtfully indicating the best zones to concentrate on. She is down like a ton of bricks on self-pity ('Stop whimpering,') is ready to bolster up the faint-hearted ('Get wise and get tough') and she is a bold champion of the virtues of oral sex and of masturbation. (You hear a rattling sound? It is the clatter of dry bones as every Victorian-minded clergyman and schoolmaster revolves briskly in his grave.) But don't imagine that just anything goes. She is far from sure about the alleged benefits of group sex, usually a male suggestion ('You've got to be watchful with this high-spirited man of yours').

Those of us who lead what I suppose must be regarded as fairly sophisticated metropolitan lives can have little or no idea of the anxious agonies endured by, say, a lonely bank clerk in remotest Northumberland who, at the age of 18, suddenly realised that he hadn't yet started noticing girls and now, aged 43, has gone right on not noticing them. Sexual misfits are right up dear Marje's hospitable street and there is a sharp rap over the knuckles for two parents who cannot face the fact that they have produced a wonky son who has been fortunate enough to find his own particular happiness:

> You want him to see a doctor? Why? He isn't ill. His sexual preferences are his own business. Love is love, and third-party interference, however well meaning, cannot be tolerated by lovers.

Nothing, rightly, must interfere with lovers. A daughter who complains that she cannot sleep because of her love-making parents' squeaky bed ('It's getting on my nerves') receives a crisp answer: 'Stuff your ears with cotton wool.' And likewise the grown-up children who are disgusted because their widowed mother has luckily found a lover ('You have a lot of impertinence. It's none of your business').

There is only one thing that really shocks her. Cruelty in any shape or form. Otherwise, human oddities, however outlandish, are merely matters to be either encouraged or advised upon (she doesn't mention necrophily but one feels that she could find a place in her understanding heart for even that weird, and difficult to obtain, pastime). 'I take the view that any kind of love, any warm companionship, must be grasped with gratitude.' Quite so. There are naturally, those who scoff and she has been attacked by a lawyer, sneeringly referred to as the Queen of the Agony Aunties and asked by what right she sets herself up as an oracle. Let us answer for her. Anybody as reasonable, helpful and open-minded has every right. For many years she has been a positive cascade of wholesome good sense and has done great service. Would to God she were in the Government (all private inquiries discreetly and carefully attended to).

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Letters to the Editor

Picking on the Scots

Sir, Your front-page piece (NS 4 June) suggests that you feel that what is sauce for the imperial goose, is not, in your eyes, sauce for the United Kingdom gander.

Suppose it had been thought that the India Bill would actually have increased the likelihood of the Indians demanding, and getting, independence. Would your distinguished predecessor have said 'destroy it and start again'? Can the supporters of Home Rule for the Indians, the Kenyans, the Papuans, the Fijians find a logical basis to deny it to those unsophisticated developing Scots? More, can they actually encourage basically undemocratic political manoeuvring, even gerrymandering, in order to change or subvert the democratic process?

Could you, sir, possibly accept the thought that what is important is not the Labour Party and the SNP on a collision course, but whether Westminster, the Establishment and the English majority in the Commons are willing to accept, in this matter, the ultimate sovereignty of the Scottish electorate?

G. A. FISHER
Chairman, London Branch SNP
18 Kingsway
Gerrards Cross, Bucks.

Sir, A. J. P. Taylor (NS 4 June) asserts, on the question of Scottish (sorry, Scotch) independence, that 'Many concessions have been made. Scotland has its own church and its own system of law'.

A semantic quibble from a Scot (sorry, a Scotchman) may be appropriate before independence allows English to develop as a pure, crystalline stream, unsullied by any baleful Scottish (sorry, Scotch) influence. The *OED* defines 'concession' as 'the action of conceding (anything asked or required); a grant'. Scotland has had her own church since the Reformation and her own system of law from time immemorial, and has never been dependent for these great institutions on concessions from anybody.

ANDREW DICKSON
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Edinburgh

Puritan Educational Ethic

Sir, Peter Wilby's comments in reviewing *The Creighton Report* (NS 28 May) are soft liberalism gone really bad, As a teacher, I haven't any politics but I (and all our schools) have some values; among them is the belief that independence, self-confidence and respect for others are 'good'. As a private person, I hope that our young people will develop these qualities and use them to sweep away capitalist society; some of my colleagues who also believe in independence etc. hope our young people will use these attitudes for other purposes. Pluralism is all very well, but addleheads like Peter Wilby are betraying young people if they suppose this means the sort of laissez-faire that leaves large numbers of children where they are – confused and corrupted by (in my private view) capitalist society.

Who says the Puritan ethic is not to be preached by schools, nor respect for authority? Presumably, the people who decide for children which bits of the curriculum are 'essential' and therefore compulsory. What a cheek! Talk about having it both ways. As a matter of daily classroom practice, teachers *know* that hard work is for many children the way they gain the chance to increase their options and so their self-respect. No child should be left in doubt about what the Puritan ethic could do for him.

Peter Wilby's outlook is basically cynical – he can't believe that if we teach the young *anything* they won't in the end know any better than their elders. Fortunately, many of us in schools think otherwise, and, as Shaw pointed out, this is why we still believe in the possibility of human progress! But what really shows Peter Wilby's confusion is his reference to 'a grammar school system dominated by academic and middle-class values'. Does he really think that these two values are compatible?

If the middle classes are the product of grammar schools it is because those schools have ratted on the academic (pursuit of truth, love of beauty etc.) and peddled academic left-overs as a means of material advancement. Hence the need for a comprehensive education that is something more than grammar schools for all, or Peter Wilby's slap-happy and unthinking do-as-you-please.

M. TUCKER
Belper High School
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Belper, Derbyshire

Making the Borrower Pay

Sir, As a librarian I feel I must reply to Douglas Hurd's suggestion (Letters 4 June) of the introduction of charges, or a subscription, for the use of public libraries, as a solution to the present squeeze on resources available to public libraries. Far from solving the problems of the public library, the introduction of charges will only exacerbate them, for were a nominal charge to be introduced an increase of staff would be necessitated merely to audit and administer the funds, so that it is conceivable that the charges may cost more to administer than they would raise in revenue!

Were the charges to alter the public library from a public service to a profit-making concern, they would have to be fairly high, which could result in a decline in issues and necessitate further raising of charges. Before long the cut-throat cost efficiency experts would suggest that the public library was duplicating the role of the bookshop and that private enterprise could do the job more adequately via the bookshop. The end result would be disastrous for both the publishing industry and authors as the public library provides a considerable proportion of the market for publishers.

It is no more reasonable to make the library user pay for his bibliographic needs than it is to make the sick pay for the health service or parents pay for their children's education. I would have thought the Conservative Party had learnt their lesson after the farce of their museum charges. Evidently they have not.

ANDREW HUDSON
78 Duke Street
Rochdale

Postal Protest

Sir, Protest as it may (NS 4 June), I do not think the Post Office can get away from its shocking record of failure in service to the public.

More than 50 years ago, when I first lived in Porthcurno, there was an accessible post office from which a letter, posted at 4 p.m. reached most places in the country next day, first post. At present we have no sub-post office at all, must buy our stamps from the grocer, and can only post packets of a size to go through the letter box. The nearest post office is too far for a great many pensioners to walk. To go there by bus costs 10p single, with a two-hour wait for a bus back. It seems that the Post Office has carefully measured distances and has evidently sublime knowledge of just how far an elderly retired person ought to be made to walk, if he or she can.

While we suffer this deprivation, we have watched our road torn up for many miles, at the cost of I do not know how many millions, to carry a cable for the Post Office from the beach of our cove. As a further economy, Post Office workers are being retired, and our incoming delivery sent by car. We *might* get a post office if some retired person would make available a room and undertake the arduous and exacting work At the same time we have a service from the county library by regular caravan, which stops at several accessible points, to which we can walk and borrow books free. Why has the Post Office not the originality to have a similar travelling Post Office van?

As it is, people like me, who, even in a minor way, contribute to this amenity by writing books, will quite certainly be obliged to leave rural areas, because the loss of facilities renders it almost impossible to do their work. This is not, by far, the only rural area in which similar economies are taking place. The loss of the Sunday collection also matters greatly to workers in rural areas.

DORA RUSSELL
Carn Voel
Porthcurno, nr Penzance

Civil Service Unions

Sir, Christopher Huhne should really be congratulated for getting so much into his 'World of the Civil Service Unions' (NS 4 June) but, in attempting to deal with so many problems in one article, superficiality was unavoidable and I would like to comment on some of the things he touched upon.

Mr Huhne suggests that anti-Marxist 'scaremongering' and the 'indiscreet involvement of the Conservative Central Office' with its 'lists of *Tory-approved* candidates' had brought 'the law and party politics' as unwarranted intrusions into the internal affairs and conference debates of the CPSA and the Society of Civil and Public Servants. The stance of 'party political neutrality . . . is particularly carefully cultivated in the more senior Society', we are told, and 'Gerry Gillman, the general secretary of the Society, has protested vehemently' to the Conservative Central Office. As one of those apparently named on a Central Office 'Society' list, may I say that, as a member of the Labour Party for 30 years, I take exception to being described, at least by implication, as someone who is *'Tory-approved'* (Christopher Huhne) or *'Central Office backed'* (Gerry Gillman) without it being made clear that names appeared on Central Office lists without the approval or consent of the individuals named? While I agree, therefore, with Gerry Gillman when he says that 'Central Office just haven't thought about the implications' of their actions, I think that it is worth recalling that they were at least partly motivated by 'the action of the International Socialists and Communists in giving out their lists of favoured candidates (in the CPSA) in *Redder Tape* last October'. John Bowis, National Organiser, Conservative Trade Unionists, writing in the *Guardian* on 26 March, admitted that their action was 'understandably resented by the IS and CP members'. He then claimed, however naïve we may

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consider it, that while 'they [the IS and CP] canvassed union members . . . supported candidates of their own political parties' and wanted to 'further their party political ends, rather than the interests of the union members', the Conservative Party did not.

Mr Huhne chides Mrs Losinska because 'her innuendoes . . . have remained unsubstantiated' although the 'Losinska affair introduced other "politically motivated" groups'. Mr Huhne considers that 'the very astringency of the screening process makes Mrs Losinska's allegations' (that 'nearly 10 per cent of the *active* members of [her] union are now supporters of the militant Left') 'inherently improbable', yet he says that 'International Socialists were running openly in the CPSA elections'. Is it wrong, then, to identify the IS as being 'supporters of the militant Left'? And have astringent screening processes excluded them from the service?

I find it surprising that Mr Huhne, in following the Losinska affair and in reading up for his article, has not himself stumbled across more evidence which might suggest the existence of other politically motivated groups at work in the CPSA and the Society. That members might have been alerted to the possible existence of such groups could be one beneficial effect of the rather cack-handed Tory intervention into the strange world of the civil service unions.

OWEN KELLY
National Executive Council
Society of Civil and Public Servants
Dept of the Environment
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On from Wolfenden

Sir, We are pleased to read in 'Labour's Draft Programme for Britain' that the NEC considers that the Government should review the age of consent for male homosexual relations. However, we feel that this policy is an evasion of the issue.

The Labour movement has been in the vanguard of calling for social and economic equality for women, racial minorities, the disabled, pensioners and many other underprivileged groups. We believe it is only the ignorance of the true facts about homosexuality that keeps our movement from adopting a full policy of equality similar to that already operative in many European countries. It is up to the movement to educate itself and to invite homosexual rights activists to address our meetings. Millions of our citizens are deprived because of prejudice. Labour should not shelve this issue by a Royal Commission.

M. R. ROWLAND, Secretary, Gay Labour Group; IAN CHRISTIE, Chairman, Lothian Region Labour Party; DONALD GROVES, Member of the Equity Council; J. S. GALLAGHER, former GLC Labour candidate, Ruislip-Northwood; TONY CHALLIS, Gay Labour Group, Bath CLP, former Labour Councillor; MICHAEL J. THOMAS, Chairman, Bristol West CLP; ALEX BRUCE, Secretary, Harrow Local Government Committee; G. T. LAWRENCE, Vice-Chairman, Colville Ward, Kensington CLP; TREVOR LOCKE, Member Sowerby Bridge CLP, Campaign for Homosexual Equality Executive Committee; JOHN PAYNE, London Regional Secretary, Gay Labour Group, Kensington CLP.

37 Eastbourne Avenue
London W3

Duff Cooper and Munich

Sir, When my father, Duff Cooper, resigned from Neville Chamberlain's government after the Munich sell-out he was, I am sure, both touched and grateful to receive Mr A. J. P. Taylor's congratulatory letter. But he would certainly be astonished today if he could read Mr Taylor's assertion, in your issue of 25 May, that he subsequently tried to withdraw that resignation and was prevented from doing so only by Chamberlain himself.

The truth is quite the reverse. As his own autobiography makes clear, he had contemplated resigning almost a week before, and it was the Prime Minister who had persuaded him to stay on. When he finally tendered his resignation, on 1 October 1938, he saw the King the same afternoon and the news was immediately released – so it is hard to see when there would have been time for any change of heart. But there was none. His mind was made up. He wrote in *Old Men Forget*: 'I think he [Chamberlain] was as glad to be rid of me as I was determined to go . . . Unhappy as I was at the time to leave, I have never regretted doing so.

If Mr Taylor will accept this assurance, he need no longer have his own regrets about sending those congratulations. If he will not, perhaps he will at least be good enough to let us know on what authority he makes his extraordinary allegation. I await his reply with interest.

JOHN JULIUS NORWICH
24 Blomfield Road
London W9

A. J. P. TAYLOR *writes:* Michael Wardell, then manager of the *Evening Standard*, recorded a conversation that he had with Duff Cooper shortly after the latter's resignation. It states that Duff Cooper threatened to resign at a cabinet meeting on Chamberlain's return to England after his first meeting with Hitler. It continues: 'When Chamberlain returned from Munich with "Peace in our time" his colleagues, including Duff, were unanimous in the expressions of joy and gladness. Duff stayed behind at the end of the meeting at Chamberlain's request. Duff was quite conciliatory and said he supposed his threat of resignation would be forgotten. Chamberlain refused, saying: "I am afraid that at this stage that is impossible". Duff was out.' This record was published in my *Beaverbrook*, pp 385-86 (1972) and was not challenged at the time.

The World of Biggles

Sir, I'm afraid I must bow to Bill Sweetman's superior knowledge of the literary works of W. E. Johns, but, after the heavy-handed drollery is stripped away, it is hard to find anything else in his letter (NS 4 June) which inspires reverence – or even credulity.

His message is that aviation matters should be left to the experts and the insiders, a view that is central to the philosophy of the aerospace industry, dedicated as it is to getting the maximum amount of public money with the minimum amount of public control. Mr Sweetman, a junior member of the staff of *Flight International*, has obviously learnt his lines well, although a little more of the old Biggles spirit – 'Build up your strike power . . . with *Flight International*' is a current IPC slogan – would do him no harm.

The point Mr Sweetman makes about the production costs of the multi-role combat aircraft in no way contradicts what I wrote (Letters 21 May). If Britain cancels all or part of her order for MRCAs, any increase in the cost of each plane will, of course, be the result of the economics of scale. The point I made was that if we decide *not* to cancel as a result of pressure from our Continental partners, and lumber ourselves with several hundred planes we don't want and can't afford, then it is reasonable to claim that we will be subsidising the air forces of Germany and Italy. I was also pointing out that if we cancel only part of our order – which seems likely – then the increased cost of the remaining planes will consume a large slice of the money we save. One way or another, the aerospace industry has got us into another awkward situation.

And Mr Sweetman is being very disingenuous in claiming that no useful comparisons can be made between the MRCA and its possible Soviet adversaries because of their secrecy. He writes that the Russian Backfire-B bomber is 'so secret that its size and shape are mysteries'. Yet only last week a well-known aviation journal, in an article on Warsaw Pact aircraft, published drawings and half a page of details on the Backfire, including the statement that 'The shape of the Backfire is pretty well known now'. The authors are Charles Gilson, defence editor of *Flight International* – and Bill Sweetman.

CHRIS JONES
47 Blomfield Road
London W9

Services Not Rendered

Sir, The best summary of the recent honours débâcle can be found in Tom Stoppard's latest play, aptly titled *Dirty Linen*:

> . . . The PM offered me a life peerage, for services which he said he would let me know more about in due course if I were interested. 'I hear you're a keen gardener, Cockie,' he said. 'We can call it services to conservation.' 'Not me, Rollo,' I said, 'All I use it for is a little topiary in the summer.' 'Services to sport,' he said – ignorant fool. 'No, no, Rollo,' I said, 'I really have no interests of any kind.' 'That will be services to the arts,' he said.

JACK EMERY
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Impermissible Licence

Sir, In my poem *Con Amore* (NS 28 May) the eighth line should have read 'the theme is *movement* only'. The unfortunate misprint which substituted the word *moment* upset the poem's metaphorical balance completely, and I hope you will allow me to make this correction for any attentive reader who was puzzled, irritated or thought I had taken leave of my senses.

JOHN MOLE
142c St Albans Road
Sandridge, St Albans

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SUMMER BOOKS

David Garnett

Lady into Woolf

Moments of Being by VIRGINIA WOOLF
Chatto £4.80

Much has been written about the life and work of Virginia Woolf before and since Quentin Bell's masterly biography. A flood of interpretative books and essays will fall on us during the next few decades. Some will light up obscure corners, but most will hide her and her work in a fog of words. Like D. H. Lawrence, she will be interpreted *ad nauseam*, instead of being enjoyed. So, ignoring interpreters, it is good to read what she says about herself. *Moments of Being* consists of 38 pages of 'Reminiscences' written at the beginning of her career, 73 pages of 'A Sketch of The Past' written in the months before her suicide, and three papers read to the Memoir Club. They are of absorbing interest and well edited.

It is really an escape story. If Vanessa and Virginia had not lost their parents early in life, the greatest English woman painter and the greatest English woman writer of the first half of the 20th century would have probably made 'good' marriages and their work would have been that of amateurs. Mrs Cornish called their mother 'a killjoy' perhaps not only because her beauty attracted all the men, but because she was gloomy, serious, devoted to good works and was, except for her agnosticism, a conventional Victorian lady. If she had lived, I suspect that Vanessa would have wasted hours in soup kitchens which were better spent at her easel. And Virginia, married to some handsome young peer, would have ruined his life and done little else.

But after the deaths of their mother and their older half sister, she and her sister Vanessa, two years older than herself, were left with a selfish, self-pitying, aged father and their half brother George Duckworth, who attempted to take their mother's place, to direct their lives and 'bring them out' into Society. He was a young, handsome, stupid man, a favourite with dowagers and very socially ambitious. Virginia writes of him:

> He accepted Victorian Society so implicitly than an archaeologist would find him of the greatest interest. Like a fossil, he had taken every crease and wrinkle of the conventions of 1890-1900.

Apparently he was their mother's favourite child because of his resemblance to her first husband.

Keynes told Virginia that the best thing she ever did was her memoir on George, printed here as 'Hyde Park Gate'. It was a view which dashed her, not unnaturally. But George is the finest portrait in this book. After the death of their father, led by Vanessa and Thoby, Leslie Stephen's children escaped from George Duckworth and put themselves outside the pale of conventional society. Vanessa was never in any real danger: she was a far stronger character than Virginia and, unlike Mrs Lot, she never looked back with regret or curiosity at the doomed cities of Belgravia and Mayfair. Though she had put herself beyond the pale, Virginia was always fascinated and in her paper read to the Memoir Club, called 'Am I A Snob?', she tries to analyse and explain why. She says, and I agree, that 'the essence of snobbery is that you wish to impress other people'. That is why most of us are snobs when we are young. Incidentally, Vanessa was the least snobbish person one can imagine. But there is another reason for snobbery: romanticism. When Virginia wrote, early on in *Orlando* (unless my memory betrays me) of the Sackvilles – 'They came out of the Northern mists with crowns upon their heads' – it was not only to tease Victoria Sackville-West. There was a touch of romantic snobbery in it also and one feels her lick her lips, as well as grin. One passage in her paper on snobbery I find incredible: she must have wanted to shock the company. It is: 'If you ask me would I rather meet Einstein or the Prince of Wales, I plump for the Prince without hesitation.'

Certainly she could not have made that choice if she had enjoyed my good fortune of seeing them both in the same chamber. The occasion was the Speech from the Throne. Einstein, a free man, 'Charlie Chaplin with the forehead of Shakespeare' as Keynes described him, was sitting in the back row of the Strangers' Gallery in the House of Lords and the Prince was on a stool at his father's feet, one of a group of bedizened prisoners behind the invisible bars of protocol. There was as much difference between the two men intellectually as there is between me and a well-trained gun-dog. And it showed in their faces.

One cannot help feeling pity for George:

> Vanessa in her white satin dress, wearing a single flawless amethyst round her neck and an enamel butterfly in her hair, beautiful, motherless, aged only eighteen, was a touching spectacle, an ornament for any dinner table, a potential peeress, anything might be made of such precious material as she was and to be seen hovering round her, providing her with jewels, and Arab horses, and expensive clothes, whispering encouragement, lavishing embraces which were not entirely concealed from the eyes of strangers, redounded to the credit of George himself and invested his figure with a pathos, which it would not otherwise have had, in the eyes of the dowagers of Mayfair. Unfortunately what was inside Vanessa did not correspond with what was outside. Underneath the necklaces and enamel butterflies was one passionate desire – for paint and turpentine, for turpentine and paint.

Poor George, who believed that aristocratic society was possessed of all the virtues and all the graces!

> He began to sob, he flung himself on his knees; he seized Vanessa in his arms; he implored her in the name of her mother, of her grandmother, by all that was sacred in the female sex and holy in the traditions of our family, to accept Lady Arthur Russell's invitation to dinner, to spend the week-end with the Chamberlains at Highbury.

Sobbing and eventually defeated by Vanessa, he turned to the younger sister. If Duncan Grant is to be believed, Virginia, in spite of her beauty, must have been unpromising material. Duncan wrote: 'Upon an unforeseen introduction for instance, there was an expression of blazing defiance, a few carefully chosen banalities and a feeling of awkwardness.' But even after the most ludicrous and terrible social disasters, George would slip into her bedroom, clasp her in his arms and whisper: 'Beloved.' The poor fellow not only felt it his sacred duty to marry them to titled husbands, but was in love with them himself. It was natural enough: they were outstand-

Peter Porter

The Coronation of Poppea

To have known personally the demon
he who sits singing in the fire
('the occupational disease of poets
is frivolity')
to experience suffering real as a colour
and hear it praised (green, green, oh green)
to wait at the hospice for death
one hand searching for another
a continuous melody, a story
this was worth being born for
the world's unfairness still playing
we have invented love, it licks us
('pur ti miro, pur ti godo')
the great bridges bow, the streets appear
the marriage of never to now
against any justice or reason
unfaithful, steadfast, forever
(Bacchus in his barge, an end to ending)
the golden eyes of the phoenix
the coronation of fire

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ingly beautiful and George seemed incapable of realising their dislike of his embraces, as well as all he stood for. Without Vanessa to organise their escape, and Thoby to introduce Leonard Woolf and his friends from Cambridge, George Duckworth might easily have driven Virginia into an asylum for the whole of her life. As it was, he did harm enough.

I first saw Virginia when she was still this fierce creature. It was at a fancy dress ball in aid of Woman's Suffrage at Crosby Hall, very soon after it had been re-erected in Cheyne Walk. Wagner was the greatest of musicians then and all the cultured who could afford it went to *The Ring* at Bayreuth. So Virginia was dressed as a Valkyrie. She was very thin and very beautiful, as she stood at gaze near me and her brother Adrian. Then she marked down a female friend on the other side of the ballroom and swooped on her like a falcon.

Julian Symons

Gentleman's Strip

The Survivors by SIMON RAVEN *Blond & Briggs* £3.95

At the end of *The Survivors,* while the body of the mathematical genius Daniel Mond is being carried from the infirmary to its grave on the island of San Francesco del Deserto in the Venetian lagoon, and the young homosexual prostitute Piero is meditating on his decision to stay with the Good Brothers on the island, and some of the other characters are thinking of the destroyed past or making plans for a destructive future, the sad fate of Venice is made visible in the form of a great oil slick, 'silent, filthy and opaque', which comes in strongly with the tide, lapping up to the landing stage.

The image is powerful and expressive. The past is past saving, and it is going down because nobody with power cares about it. As Peter Morrison, Minister of Commerce, says, the people want cars and washing machines and fish-fingers, and don't want Venice. And so Peter Morrison, the model of an upright Conservative Englishman, is at one with the American agent Earle Restarick. On the book's penultimate page they are 'quietly discussing American plans for the erasure of Venice', plans which will be supported by the British government for reasons of trade, and which none of the financiers, political and sexual shysters and mere hangers-on who make up the book's cast of characters, will lift more than a finger to oppose. Tomorrow Venice, next week Europe.

The Survivors is the tenth and last volume in Simon Raven's 'Alms For Oblivion' sequence, and the death of culture is somehow mixed up in it with the extinction of the English gentleman. 'Such gentlemen as survive, though honourable and decent men, can only be seen as futile anachronisms when once one properly appreciates the present conditions of society,' Mr Raven wrote 15 years ago. His view has hardened since then, and his gentlemen are no longer honourable and decent. Peter Morrison, after all, is a gentleman. So is Fielding Gray, the central figure in the novels, who betrays his youthful homosexual lover, behaves atrociously to a number of women, and is not above a little blackmail. Fielding, as one of the other characters tells him, is a shit. On the other hand, shits are people you can trust, because you know they're out to do you down. As the Tory politician, the Marquis of Canteloupe, puts it, you are

> better off working with shits . . . It's those chaps who have scruples that really kill you dead. They'll drop you in a sewer to drown when you least expect it, and then go round whining that it was their moral duty.

It is a mark of decay in English life that Canteloupe is succeeded as Minister of Commerce by Peter Morrison, a man with scruples.

The view of society put forward in these novels is not dissimilar to that found in the work of another Tory with a romantic view of the English gentleman, Evelyn Waugh. Both writers hankered to be 'gentlemen' themselves, and Raven in a semi-autobiographical book called *The English Gentleman* (one of the characters in it is named Peter Morrison) writes amusingly about the vanity of his aspiration, which is perfectly expressed in the fact that a gentleman is never concerned with gentility. Both detest the spread of lower-middle-class morality that might be called Hooperism. In opposition to the various vulgarities of the modern world Raven invokes an ideal classicism, Waugh an ideal aristocracy. Both seem to believe that there are religious answers to the problems of the individual psyche. Both show a simple national patriotism ('British and proud of it,' as one Raven character says). The difference is that the abominable Waugh used his generally detestable or absurd ideas about society as material for considerable works of art, while the much more genial Raven has been able to produce only a collection of strip cartoons.

One should be clear about this. Simon Raven's talents are both inadequate and unsuited to his subject. The 'Alms For Oblivion' novels are consistently easy and amusing to read, but artistically they are negligible. Most of them contain scenes of political or sexual melodrama of the crudest kind, acted out by characters conceived in terms which are often ludicrous. Their most interesting attribute is an Ouida-like vigour, a sense that Mr Raven is so enthralled by his own creations that he has come to believe in them himself.

Some examples. *The Judas Boy* (1968) is a kind of spy thriller in which Fielding Gray, whose face was badly mutilated in Cyprus during an incident after the troubles, is sent out there again to do a documentary TV programme. Both American and British agents want to stop the programme, and to do so the Americans are prepared to eliminate Fielding. At one point he finds himself in that ancient movie dilemma of being in a coach detached from the rest of the train: 'Where? Why? How? Never mind that, one thing to think about – escape. Escape? From a runaway coach doing thirty miles an hour in a tunnel?'

Fielding duly escapes, only to find himself in trouble a couple of chapters later when, climbing up a ship's rope ladder, he is attacked by a deck hand who launches a matchet 'tool edge foremost straight at Fielding's head'. Preserved from train and matchet, he succumbs to the Greek boy Nicos, in fact a prostitute in the pay of Earle Restarick, but in Fielding's eye (literally one, the other having been lost in Cyprus) a reincarnation of Christopher Roland, the betrayed schoolboy of long ago.

The Judas Boy is about par for the Raven course in plausibility. In *Come Like Shadows* (1972), which contains some lively comic scenes relating to a new film production of the *Odyssey* on Corfu, Fielding is kidnapped by Restarick, who threatens to make him a heroin addict unless he reveals some – in fact non-existent – secret information. He is rescued by Canteloupe, in company with two other long-serving members in the series, Captain Detterling and Somerset Lloyd-James. 'I am a Minister of Her Britannic Majesty,' Canteloupe says:

> and these two gentlemen are members of the British Parliament . . . Whoever you may be you dare not lay hands on a peer of the British Parliament and a Minister of the British Crown.

Oh, my Palmerston and my Disraeli . . . but this is 1970. Add such stereotypes as the good-hearted whore, Tessie Buttock of Buttock's Hotel, and wicked Jude Holbrook who in another novel threatens people with vitriol ('Fair enough,' says Fielding, that Gentleman Ranker damned to hell and eternity, while planning how to miss the acid and get the Vital Letter), and it may be clear why I call the books strip cartoons.

That admirable image of the oil slick is untypical of *The Survivors*, a book with less than its author's usual liveliness. The setting is Venice, and the underlying theme of a rotting rather than a botched civilisation is propped by Fielding's not very exciting investigation into the character and past life of a figure seen in a painting. There is less sexual action than usual, although not less talk. 'Longest prick on the conference and a pair of ghoulies like basket balls,' says an English lady novelist about a visiting American writer at a surely rather unusual PEN Club party. There is a good deal of slack writing, including the conversation of a character who in half a dozen pages is said to have snapped, grizzled, grated, grumped and griped.

A strip cartoon may have the vicious power of caricature, but this one doesn't, because Simon Raven's talent is genial rather than corrosive. He has two veins of talent, one for melodrama and the other for wild lubricious comedy, but neither has been much help to him in dealing with a grand overall theme for which – as that English lady novelist might put it – he just hasn't the equipment.

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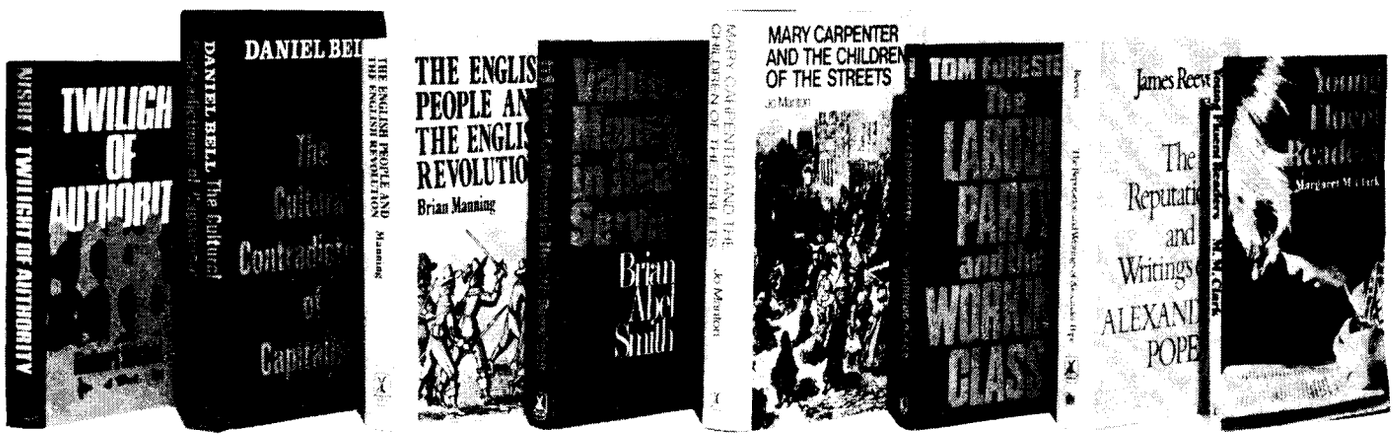
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Michael Davie

The Boyfriends

Oxford In The Twenties by CHRISTOPHER HOLLIS *Heinemann* £4.50

Mr Christopher Hollis is one of the last of the amateurs. He has been a schoolmaster, a Conservative MP (for Devizes, 1945-55), an occasional cricket reporter, and chairman of a publishing firm, Hollis & Carter. He has already written an autobiography, *Along the Road To Frome*. Now, in his mid-seventies, he has produced a short book (129 pages) in which anecdotal recollections of five Oxford friends are sandwiched between two essays about Oxford before and since the Twenties.

Hollis went up to Balliol, as a scholar from Eton, in 1920. His time there coincided with Oxford's Indian summer. The Great War was over; nobody thought there could be another. The main differences between pre- and post-war Oxford were, Mr Hollis tells us, the introduction of buses and a new readiness among undergraduates to discuss homosexuality. Socially, nothing had changed, though there was talk in Balliol about the need to admit more young men 'from Birmingham, etc.'. One of the few members of the university to concern himself with politics was the scientist J. B. S. Haldane, who used to lecture for the Communist Party throughout the Midlands, but only on condition that he was given whisky after the lecture: 'I will not lecture on Ovaltine,' he said in disgust. Apart from Maurice Bowra, later the Warden of Wadham College, few of Hollis's circle made any attempt to get a good degree; many of the brightest undergraduates of that generation went down with poor degrees, or with no degree at all. If the worst came to the worst, as in some cases it did, they could always become schoolmasters, a fate that briefly overtook Hollis himself, Evelyn Waugh and John Betjeman, among others.

The dons, in those golden years, were very little trouble. They were 'not an important part of Oxford life, not much interfering with our lives'. They put up with more than they would tolerate today. Waugh and his friend Terence Greenidge (who during the second world war was vaguely attached to the Oxford Playhouse, where he would write sonnets to actresses comparing them to railway trains) set up a stuffed dog in Hertford quadrangle as an allurement for the Dean, to whom they imputed, on very slight evidence, a sexual connection with dogs. Hollis and Waugh used to bark outside the Dean's door. Hollis also tells the story of Lionel Hedges, a cricketing undergraduate, who was approached on the morning of a match by a seedy-looking fellow: taking him for a reporter, Hedges said brusquely, 'I have nothing to say to you.' The man protested, but Hedges sent him away. Later he discovered that the man was his tutor. Hedges, too, became a schoolmaster.

The Indian summer produced a vintage crop. Besides Waugh and Betjeman, Hollis's contemporaries and near-contemporaries included Graham Greene, Anthony Powell, David Talbot Rice, Claud Cockburn, Richard Pares, Harold Acton, Cyril Connolly, Peter Quennell, Kenneth Clark, David Cecil, Douglas Woodruff, Roy Harrod, Cyril Radcliffe, Henry Yorke (the novelist 'Henry Green'), and Lord Dunglass (the future Prime Minister). The five he has chosen to write about are Maurice Bowra; the failed politician Leslie Hore-Belisha; the cricketer and cricket-writer R. C. Robertson-Glasgow; Evelyn Waugh; and Harold Acton. Mr Hollis says hopefully that these five, though 'eccentric', were all 'reasonably representative of the Oxford of their years'. Perhaps they were. Two were homosexual. One was the most unpleasant man, as some think, of his era – 'a viper' (Lord Birkenhead's view of Waugh). One committed suicide.

Mr Hollis's loyalty to his friends consistently gets the better of him. He knew Bowra, for instance, during nearly half a century. Bowra became the most influential figure in Oxford: not only Warden of Wadham but Vice-Chancellor, and the patron of generations of the cleverest undergraduates. But was his influence good or bad? Mr Hollis quotes Anthony Powell's description of Bowra as

> . . . accepting as absolutely natural open snobbishness, success-worship, personal vendettas, unprovoked malice, disloyalty to friends, reading other people's letters (if not lying about, to be sought in unlocked drawers) – the whole bag of tricks.

Mr Hollis says plaintively: 'I do not think Mr Powell is quite fair. He does not allow enough for Maurice's high spirits.'

The most original 'sketch' describes Hore-Belisha. When he went up to Oxford, he 'saw himself as a future Disraeli'. Ambitious and unprincipled – 'a man upon whom opinions did not sit so very heavily' – he was accustomed to deal with all questions, when campaigning, by calling out, 'Let the will of the people prevail.' Then his career collapsed. He was sacked by Chamberlain from his post as Secretary of State for War, and developed the habit, prompted by Cardinal Godfrey, then the Apostolic Delegate and his neighbour on Wimbledon Common, of going into monastic retreat. He used to take a radio and bottle of whisky in with him, and help the monks to shuck corn. 'It is not, I think, unfair to say that he appreciated the [monastic] life more than the purpose of the life.' In the monastery he meditated, sometimes on his chances of returning to high political office: a bizarre end for a would-be Disraeli.

On Evelyn Waugh, Mr Hollis adds some details to Christopher Sykes's recent biography, but attempts no analysis of Waugh's strange character. Like Mr Sykes, he quotes Hilaire Belloc's electrifying remark about Waugh – 'He is possessed' – without explaining, for the benefit of readers who are not Roman Catholics, exactly what Belloc meant, or might have meant, or what fellow Roman Catholics take him to have meant. The best new Waugh anecdote told by Mr Hollis concerns Waugh's hostility to the telephone. 'I remember one day a manservant coming in to say, "Mr Randolph Churchill would like to speak to you on the telephone, sir". "Tell him to write," said Evelyn.'

Two points mentioned by Mr Hollis – and not, I think, mentioned by Mr Sykes – may be more than details. In the later Twenties, Waugh 'accepted the idea – whether with any basis or not I cannot say – that he was an unwanted child'. Mr Hollis also says that Waugh, when he went to teach at Aston Clinton,

> was quite frank and unashamed about the pleasure that he derived from caning the boys there. He was quite popular at that school from the engaging anecdotes which he used to tell the boys and maintained – whether truly or not – that, provided that he afterwards gave him a tie or a few sweets as recompense, the victim enjoyed being caned. In any event Evelyn made no pretence that the operation was meant seriously as a punishment for misdemeanour. It was a frank pleasure.

Claire Tomalin

Oink

Ottoline: The Life of Lady Ottoline Morrell by SANDRA JOBSON DARROCH *Chatto* £6.00

The story of Circe is a warning to all hostesses. The more invitations are looked for and parties flocked to, the more swine are likely to be grunting and rooting about in the mud later. John, Lamb, Huxley, Lawrence, Russell, Murry, Strachey, Woolf: Lady Ottoline captured them (and many more) one after another, first in her grey and yellow Bedford Square salon with the silk cushions, and later at Garsington, where decor and generosity were both memorable. Most rendered thanks with grunts, if not snorts. In the Bedford Square days Henry James advised her: 'Look at them, dear lady, over the banisters. But don't go down amongst them.' But to go down amongst them was exactly what she wanted to do.

Born in 1873, she had that sense of exclusion from intellectual and artistic life that went with an English aristocratic background and upbringing. She had lost her father early, her pious and conventional mother became an invalid and died when Ottoline was only 20, her brothers were embarrassed by her: so tall, so intense, such a nose – would she enter a convent? So, to a very considerable extent, Ottoline made herself in her own image. There was her extravagant style in dress (although her insouciance about doing up a dropped suspender in full view of anyone was no doubt the superbness of her class). Her marriage to Philip Morrell was a step down socially: she sent for him and gave him permission to propose; thereafter she supported him loyally in his brave but unfortunate career as a Liberal politician. Motherhood did not come easily to her; after the birth of twins, of whom the boy died, she had no more children; instead, she pursued a course of unusual sexual freedom and useful patronage of the arts.

'. . . The head of a Medusa; but she is

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very simple and innocent in spite of it, and worships the arts,' wrote Virginia Stephen at the beginning of their long relationship. Ottoline had enjoyed some educational opportunities denied to her friend, but had merely picked at them; a term at St Andrew's allowed her to discover that logic was too dry; a few months at Oxford, where she bicycled about with a pile of books strapped to her back, led to headaches and retreat to London. From early days, she found her cultural enthusiasms arriving in the shape of men: a tour of Italy culminated in some passionate indiscretions with Axel Munthe; religious fervour led to warm exchanges with an elderly archbishop:

> Dearest Ottoline. Alas! The Queen has fixed Tuesday next for receiving the Bishops of the Lambeth Conference at Windsor, and my attendance there is absolutely necessary. What can be done about my address to your friends? . . . Would there be any chance of my seeing you Sunday if I were to call?

Asquith was another persistent, and sometimes sulky, admirer.

Later, it was her love of Russell's mind ('the beauty and transcendence of his thoughts' was her phrase) that led her to overlook the fact that she could 'hardly bear the lack of physical attraction'. It was an unusual basis, one imagines, on which to embark on a precipitate and long-drawn-out adulterous affair with a man who specifically said 'no woman's intellect is really good enough to give me pleasure as intellect'. But it seems as likely that it was a sign of her true generosity of spirit as that she simply could not resist acquiring the scalp of England's most famous philosopher.

Sandra Jobson Darroch, who writes with sympathy for her subject and has toiled lengthily and admirably to bring her out of the corners of other people's lives and stand her in the centre here, makes it quite clear that Ottoline did enjoy collecting scalps; that she sometimes lied to one lover about another; and that she applied slightly different standards to her own behaviour and to that of (say) her husband. Her infidelities were much forgiven; the discovery of his led both husband and wife into breakdowns and hospitalisation. Still, Ottoline emerges with advantage in comparison with most of those she gathered about herself. Of course Strachey being malicious is more amusing than Ottoline being silly, but what a detestable man he was in his dealings with her.

Lawrence understood her better than most, with his suggestion that she suffered from 'a lack of robust self'; that 'she had no natural sufficiency, there was a terrible void, a lack, a deficiency of being within her. And she wanted someone to close up this deficiency'. Mrs Darroch points out that Ottoline complains of precisely this 'deficiency of being' in her own memoirs; and was never able to close it up, although until the end she gathered the young and artistically aspiring about her. She died of the ministrations of quack doctors. Her widower, lonely survivor into the years of the second world war, took to bridge (a game not heard of at Garsington) and Mrs Darroch records the sad words of his deathbed: 'Partner, we can't make it. We haven't enough hearts.' Often puzzled, almost

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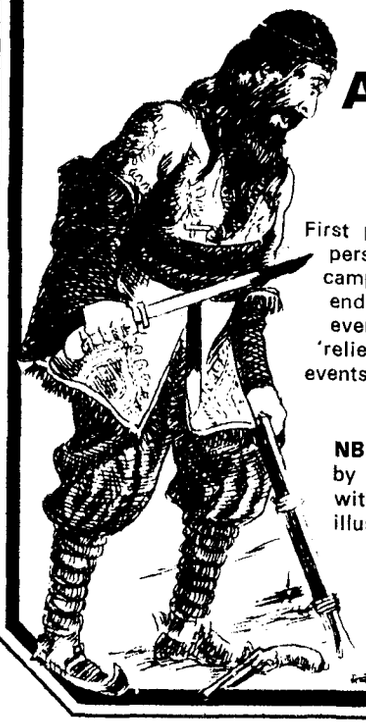

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always generous and good in their lifetimes, the Morrells earned the right to this careful and gentle biography after so much swinishness.

Anthony Howard

The Survivor

Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941-1946 by W. AVERELL HARRIMAN and ELIE ABEL *Hutchinson* £6.95

Averell Harriman is the last of the Washington Mohicans. Only he and Molotov now survive, like figures in some sepia photograph, from the principal characters of World War II. True, to outsiders, he was even then something of a shadowy figure – a man always to be found in the pictures (whether taken at Teheran, Yalta or Potsdam) but usually standing unidentified in the back row. He commanded no armies, held no great offices of state, was not even ultimately responsible for any particular policy: he still wielded, however, an influence quite out of proportion to his informal status. He was, in a phrase, President Roosevelt's 'Mr Fix-It' – first with Churchill and the British government, then with Stalin and the Soviet Union. In the years since the second world war he has held grander positions – US Secretary of Commerce, Governor of New York, even (twice) an aspirant presidential candidate – but his impact on world events was almost certainly at its greatest during the five years this book covers.

This should, therefore, be an important, even a seminal, contribution to the political literature of World War II – as illuminating about the growth and progress of the Grand Alliance as Dean Acheson's *Present at the Creation* is about the origins and development of the cold war that followed. If it fails to be that, it is largely Governor Harriman's own fault. First, he appears to have kept no regular diary and even to have written very few personal letters (nearly all of those quoted here come from the pen of his daughter, Kathleen). Secondly, unlike Churchill, he is unobtrusive almost to the point of self-obliteration. His memories alone, after all, could have been expected to lend his narrative at least the significance that always attaches to the evidence of the eye-witness. Alas, the technique that Harriman has elected to follow in order to get this book written (after 30 years) effectively sees to it that his one great asset is sacrificed. His open collaborator (rather than background 'ghost') Elie Abel is a distinguished American journalist with an excellent book on the Cuban Missile Crisis already to his credit; but inevitably here he cannot supply the 'I was there' motif. By firmly arranging to have his story told in the third person Harriman may reinforce his reputation for diplomatic discretion: unfortunately at the same time he dooms his début as an author.

It is the greater pity as in the few passages, where we do get individual insights direct, Harriman comes across as a shrewd and perceptive judge of character. As long ago as November 1944, for instance, Eisenhower made the mistake of confiding in him his aspiration to become President – only to be rewarded with the scribbled comment that same night: 'I find his naïveté astonishing.' Nor did Harriman, for all his admiration for Churchill and Roosevelt, ever allow sentiment to cloud his vision. His comments on Stalin could be said to stand as a model of objectivity:

> It is hard for me to reconcile the courtesy and consideration that he showed me personally with the ghastly cruelty of his wholesale liquidations. Others, who did not know him personally, see only the tyrant in Stalin. I saw the other side as well – his high intelligence, that fantastic grasp of detail, his shrewdness and the surprising human sensitivity that he was capable of showing, at least in the war years. I found him better informed than Roosevelt, more realistic than Churchill, in some ways the most effective of the war leaders

No doubt that kind of analytic assessment helps to explain why Harriman has been used as their chief negotiator and troubleshooter by four out of the six most recent US presidents. Today, at the age of 84, he can apparently hardly wait to pick up the torch again. If Governor Carter is elected next November, Mr Brezhnev could yet find himself across a table from the same man who exactly half-a-century ago personally negotiated a manganese mining concession with Leon Trotsky.

Neal Ascherson

T.G.M.

The Masaryks: The Making of Czechoslovakia by ZBYNĚK ZEMAN *Weidenfeld* £6.50

In the spring of 1968 they began to sell postcards of Thomas Masaryk once more in Prague. Some shops and some households even constructed little shrines in their windows: a postcard of the first President of free Czechoslovakia, an arrangement of his initials T.G.M., a few flowers. Most pictures showed the old man in his wide-brimmed hat, or that curious semi-military cap he sometimes wore. Another favourite in the windows was T.G.M. in an open car nosing its way through wild crowds and escorted by legionaries with bayonets: his return to a free Prague on 21 December 1918. After 21 August 1968, the day of another kind of entry to Prague, this particular scene became too painful to remember. It was the first postcard of that series to vanish.

Western journalists working in Prague then took a great deal of Thomas Masaryk's reputation on trust. The Czechs, it was clear saw him as a man of liberty and democracy a teacher to whose lessons ordinary people wished to return, a forbidden but unforgotten memory. They also saw him as a 'Westerniser', standing for Czechoslovakia'

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alignment with bourgeois democracies and against the Slavophil and Russian connection. To this, the visiting Westerner might add Masaryk's particular reputation in Britain, France or the United States: that he was a great liberal.

In writing this book, Zbynek Zeman has brought Masaryk into much clearer but also more distant focus. He belonged to a very particular time and place: the Slav lands of Austria-Hungary in the late 19th century. By the time he became President of the First Republic, he was already 68: born in 1850, he lived until 1937, and missed the mortal blow of Munich by one year.

'Belonged' is a misleading word. Masaryk, born of very poor parents in rural Moravia, was obstinately different all his life. As a young man, he 'kept himself pure' through scenes of Breughelish back-country licence. As a nationalist, he avoided two traditional modes of expression: he became a Protestant, and he famously rejected anti-Semitism. His defence in his magazine *Čas* of Leopold Hilsner, condemned to death for the supposed ritual murder of a girl, earned him the abuse of many patriots ('he wants to divide the whole nation for the sake of a Jew!'). Just as bravely he exposed the nationalist forgeries known as the Libuše manuscripts, the Czech equivalent of Ossian, supposed to show – as Zeman tartly puts it – 'that the Czechs were running their own state when the Germans were still rootling around for acorns'.

Most of his life was spent as a highly political professor. As an academic, he believed in the redemption of the Czechs and Slovaks through science, rationality and truth rather than through racist myth. As a politician, different as usual, he avoided the major groupings of the Agrarians or the Social Democrats and led his own tiny Czech Realist Party, the smallest Czech formation represented at Vienna. And the mainstream of nationalist strategy, the belief in the liberation of the Slav peoples by the great Russian motherland, never even dampened his feet. Much of his career was spent fencing with Karel Kramař, the right-wing Slavophil nationalist who eventually became prime minister to his presidency. Masaryk thought the Tsardom brutish and unstable. The Bolshevik regime he regarded with a sort of patronising contempt, a nuisance to his plans rather than a menace to his nation. He thought Communism interesting but crude and, although he was writing a book about Russian politics at the time, did not bother to meet Lenin when he was in Prague before the war. At the Savinkov trial in 1924, and during the post-1948 Stalinist years in Czechoslovakia, much was made of his alleged discussion with Savinkov of a possible assassination of Lenin. Zeman sets out the evidence sensibly. Such a discussion probably did take place, without Masaryk setting much store by it. He had a ruthless streak which grew stronger with age.

Czechoslovakia, in the first years of independence, was turbulent. The Bohemian Germans had to be fought, and there was a brief war to throw the Hungarians out of Slovakia. The left Social Democrats, soon to form the Czechoslovak Communist Party, thought world revolution made the national question reactionary. Masaryk, patriarchal and in his style authoritarian, was not a 'liberal' President; he governed through a clique of his own old associates and the leaders of the parties over the heads of the unstable majorities. The Communists were treated harshly, with many arrests and bans, and the gendarmerie sometimes opened fire on strikers.

As Zeman shows, Masaryk and the faithful, obedient Edvard Beneš, who served him first as secretary and then as foreign minister, were hopelessly optimistic – a Czech failing – about the strength of the European peace. Auden described old Voltaire at Ferney worrying that 'All over Europe the wicked nurses stood/Itching to boil their children . . .' Masaryk, so like Voltaire in many ways, lacked his humility and anxiety. Nothing so ridiculous could happen. He died, and the wicked nurses rushed with outstretched arms upon his country, his man Beneš, his son Jan.

This son did his best, an engaging, emotional person without great intellectual resources. Zeman treats him with mercy and respect. Jan Masaryk, whose broadcasts from London held Czech hopes alive through the occupation, ended his life as foreign minister under a Communist government at Prague. He was too humble, unlike his father: even when he thought Beneš was wrong, he bowed to his father's choice and served him.

Dr Zeman has done Czechoslovakia a

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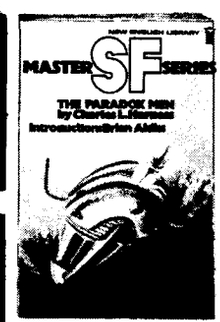

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JONATHAN CAPE

service with this book. It was no service to his people that foreigners thought of Thomas Masaryk as a saintly Gladstonian liberal, or supposed that pre-war Czechoslovakia was a tranquil little model of democracy. After all, the fact that over 40 per cent of the people voted Communist in free elections in 1946 can't be assimilated into a canonising legend about the Masaryks and their legacy. It is good, too, that the author doubts the authenticity of the two mysterious pages at the beginning and the end of the Masaryk chronicle: the rumours that Masaryk senior was really the illegitimate son of an Austrian Jew, and the theory that Jan was pushed rather than fell to his death from the window of the Czernin Palace in 1948. Whatever else they were not, the Masaryks – like Jan Hus – were enemies of the myth and partisans of truth.

Alan Ryan

Side Effects

Value for Money in Health Services by BRIAN ABEL-SMITH *Heinemann* £5.50 and £2.25

Although some readers may wish Professor Abel-Smith had meant this little book as a more direct contribution to the improvement of the NHS in particular, the first thing to be said about it is that it represents extraordinary value for money in the educational services. There is a prodigious amount of information here, about the origins of systems of medical care in Europe, Asia, North and South America, and about the ways in which different societies organise and pay for those services today; and it is packed in with the sort of efficiency normally confined to the suitcases of hardened travellers. Among the minor miracles of compression is a chapter in which the author spells out just what disadvantages any given system of payment for services rendered entails – the Japanese over-inject and over-prescribe, the Germans remove far too many appendices, the Californians rip out twice as many tonsils as the Swedes, and all these phenomena stem from the financial inducements of different ways of paying doctors and surgeons.

On the awkwardly ultimate questions – how much good health is enough, whose health is to be sacrificed to whose – Abel-Smith takes a rationally agnostic stand; in the end we'll know whether we're getting value for money only when we know more than at present about what medical services actually achieve and what people at large want. But these ultimate ethical questions – such as asking how much real improvement in the standard of living a given increase in GNP represents – afflict all inquiries which touch on the imperfection of money measures of individual well-being.

Meanwhile, the social scientist can do an indispensably useful job of just the sort that is done here, by analysing imperfections in the medical 'market', by noting side-effects of insurance systems, the costs of checking up on abuses, the interaction of ethical constraints and economic incentives and so on. Even non-hypochondriacal and unsociologically minded readers will have a bracingly good time as they shed misconceptions and pre-conceptions on every page.

Alethea Hayter

Neige d'antan

The Order of the Rose: The Life and Ideas of Christine de Pizan by ENID MCLEOD *Chatto* £6.50

For a woman – an immigrant, a widow, without beauty, high birth, wealth, or educational advantages – to maintain herself and her family by her pen, wield political influence, and achieve an international reputation in the France of the late 14th century is a feat so astonishing that an empty niche in the feminist pantheon must long have been waiting for the heroine rediscovered in this very original biography. Christine de Pizan, daughter of an Italian doctor and astrologer at the French court, married at 15 to a junior Court official, widowed at 25 and having to spend exhausting and humiliating years in pestering and cajoling obstructive bureaucrats to get possession of her own inheritance, seemed singularly ill-placed to become a celebrated author. Her discovery of her own literary powers, when she was in her early thirties, seems to have been almost casual, but there was nothing casual about the strenuous self-education and will-power, the judicious string-pulling, with which she subsequently set herself to become a professional writer. Her range was very wide; she wrote elegiac ballades, moral precepts, debates between imaginary lovers, biography, political commentaries, even a military handbook. Even Enid McLeod's skilful and witty summaries cannot make Christine de Pizan's political and social allegories sound accessible or easily readable today, though the snatches of autobiography with which they were illuminated remain delightful. As a writer, Christine continues somewhat remote; but as a personality and as a thinker, for her 'life and ideas' as the sub-title of this book justly has it, she escapes from obsolete convention into a vividly contemporary interest.

Perhaps the most topical today of all her favourite themes was her consistent championship of the position and reputation of women. She claimed that women should be better educated, should have better – and more easily enforceable – legal rights; and she attacked the literary cliché on which the male chauvinism of her day was based: the assumption that all women are deceitful, capricious, indiscreet, disloyal. Even when this myth was enshrined in one of the greatest mediaeval masterpieces, the *Roman de la Rose*, she had the temerity to challenge it, thus provoking a celebrated literary controversy; and in her own books, her *Cité des Dames* and her *Dit de la Rose*

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(which imagined an Order of the Rose, an association of men sworn to speak no slander against women), she maintained that women, like men, should be judged and treated as individuals, not as an immutably inferior category of being. As Enid McLeod makes clear, Christine was not a doctrinaire feminist. 'She merely wanted women to be treated as beings with the same human values as men, with some of the same gifts and virtues, and others of their own.' Although in her old age she wrote a poem in praise of her younger contemporary Joan of Arc, her main interest was in the ordinary destiny of women – marriage, which she saw as at its best a partnership in which the woman is trusted and valued as a companion, not exploited as a household drudge or romanticised as a toy goddess.

To extract from Christine's diffuse and difficult works the telling details – the midnight letter-writing, the icy mornings spent pursuing shifty lawyers, the rare excursion into a flowery spring countryside – which bring her portrait alive must have been a formidable task. Readers familiar with French history and literature will be impressed with the thorough scholarship on which this book is based (provided they are not deterred by the garish dust-jacket from looking into it at all). For those other readers who, like Jane Austen's Catherine Morland, find mediaeval history nothing but 'the quarrels of popes and kings, with wars or pestilences on every page; the men all so good for nothing, and hardly any women at all', a blur of larger-than-life male figures in primary colours, here is a recognisable middle-class individual with whom one can identify, brought forward into sharp focus – a small serious woman, always frugally wearing the same blue dress, sitting in a narrow study with her white dog at her feet, writing and writing to earn the money to pay the grocery bills.

John Fowles

Aperitifs

Companion Guide to Devon and Cornwall
by DARRELL BATES *Collins* £3.50

I am very much a Michelin man, and in my view most other countries' regional guides stand no better than their cuisines against the classic French product. The excellence of the *Guides Verts* lies in their logical planning and their skill in raising appetite, but not ruining it by over-description – something well symbolised by their policy of using line drawings, not photographs. The planning is in those admirably concise little introductory essays on regional character, art, history, nature and the rest; in the set programmes, in the gazeteer lay-out, the excellent local maps. But the no less important art of raising interest without killing it has very largely to do with the much clearer distinction the French make between the tourist guide and the travel book. Personal taste, the revelation of the writer in the mirror of the place, is of the essence of the latter. The permanent charm of *Eothen* is not the Middle East, but Kinglake – and that goes for every great example of the genre.

The value of personal taste diminishes sharply when it comes to the guide. For me it is precisely the anonymity, the feel of an experienced editorial *équipe*, that makes the Michelin guide what it is. Of course it is open to Barthes's famous criticism: that in most areas of taste it manifests a cliché-ridden bourgeois notion of what is worth the visit. But at least it is clear in its aims; it never tries to do the visit for you; and as a provider of choice it functions brilliantly well.

However, having put my cards on the table, I confess that this new Collins Companion does partly shake my faith in them. Of its kind, the solid prose guide written by one man – in this case Sir Darrell Bates, a former Colonial Office chief secretary and old hand at the travel book – *Devon and Cornwall* is outstanding, both notably thorough and very agreeably written. I can guarantee the thoroughness, having discussed the book recently with Professor Bill Hoskins, a far greater authority than I am on the two counties concerned – and he told me with a twinkle in his eye that he had ransacked its pages for errors and omissions, without the least success.

The photographs are perhaps a little trite after Roger Mayne's brilliantly atmospheric shots in the *Shell Guide of Devon*, but the text is very shrewdly composed – great and close knowledge lightly imparted – to meet all tastes and needs. The culture-hunters and those who simply want to discover places away from it all will be equally satisfied. Sir Darrell also has a sharp and funny eye for the less usual, both in history and in the now. The mystery of why David & Charles settled in Newton Abbot is solved; it has the best fish-and-chippers in the West (Camborne isn't bad, either). And next time I pass I shall pay my devotions before the otherwise run-of-the-mill painted roodscreen at Higher Ashton near Exeter; it is recommended for two 'unsaintly-looking girls' (fifth and ninth panels from the south). What to look for in more famous shrines is also selected with impeccable judgment.

I think two general tips might be added. The first is that much greater pleasure is to be got from this largely secret, hidden corner of Britain if the traveller teaches himself to read the inch-to-a-mile Ordnance Survey sheet. It is very necessary if this guide (whose own maps are hopelessly below Michelin standards) is to be properly enjoyed. Lesser scales, like those in most motoring map-books, are not enough.

The second bit of advice concerns the growing unwisdom of visiting the peninsula during the annual descent of what we natives call the grockles and the emmets; that is, from late July to early September. The most beautiful time is the spring, and a West-country landscape without at least a hint of rain is not (save this year) a typical one. One hasn't known North Devon or Cornish cliffs until one has seen them in a full winter gale. The Scillies are at their

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JOHN MURRAY

most ravishing in February and March – magical isles indeed, with their mildness and mistiness, their huge Atlantic swells. Out of season, even the summer hells of Looe, Polperro and St Ives gain a kind of poetry. I know school holidays give most people sadly little choice, but to those fortunate enough to have it . . . forget high summer, and try the subtler pleasures of the rest.

Naomi Lewis

Jo's Ploys

Behind a Mask: The Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott edited by MADELEINE STERN *W. H. Allen* £4.50

In that compulsive but irritating work *Good Wives* you will (or should) remember how Jo March, earning a meagre living teaching, sewing and nurserymaiding in Boston, finds a readier source of income by dashing off 'thrilling tales' for popular magazines. Until, that is, her kind gruff mentor Professor Bhaer (based, it is said, on Miss Alcott's idea of Goethe) guesses at the truth. A page has caught his eye. 'It is not well,' he says: 'I haf no patience with those who make this harm.' Jo cautiously glances down and sees 'a pleasing illustration composed of a lunatic, a corpse, a villain and a viper'. Though the text is unsigned, she betrays herself by a blush. 'They *are* trash,' she tells herself as she goes off to burn a substantial pile of manuscripts. 'I've gone on blindly hurting myself and other people, for the sake of money; and *what* should I do if they were seen at home?' 'She was beginning,' the author busily adds, 'to desecrate some of the womanliest attributes of a woman's character.' If we keep in mind the autobiographical base of the March books, the whole of this curious chapter, with its account of Jo's search for data, and its view of the editor's office, is worth attention. Certainly, we should not be surprised to learn that similar tales by L. M. Alcott herself exist, and that – though buried for nearly a century in long-vanished papers under well-hidden pseudonyms – they have been brought into daylight. Miss Stern, the principal sleuth, has now produced a first selection, with an account of the hunt.

So here, in respectable book form, are four *nouvelles*, by Anon or by A. M. Barnard (L. M. Alcott's most favoured disguise): *Pauline's Passion and Punishment, The Mysterious Key, The Abbot's Ghost or Maurice Treherne's Temptation*, and *Behind a Mask or A Woman's Power*. 'Trash'? Or, to quote the blurb, 'a major literary discovery'? Neither quite the one, nor (in the sense intended) the other – but of undeniable interest. No wonder her editors clamoured for more, and got them, month after month. The first of these, which (in 1862) won her a $100 prize in a New York paper, is set in exotic Cuba; but for the rest we move around the ancestral halls, the Gothic chambers and old estates of Radcliffe, Poe, Lefanu and Wilkie Collins. Here we are at a houseparty – jealousies, secrets; there, in an echoing mansion, where the final heir awaits the ancient curse. The recurring theme is of some humiliation or smouldering wrong which needs to be avenged, more often than not by a woman of mysterious past, and of magnetic allure.

No one who really wants concealment should set down a line of fiction. But what would you guess from these tales? Not, for one thing, at the author's ascetic childhood among the Transcendentalists – Emerson, Hawthorne, or her own unworldly father. You can tell, though, that here is a natural yarnspinner, writing with dazzling ease and (for the needed moment) absolute belief. And you might suspect – rightly – that the author also had her share of humiliation and hardships to work off in terms of fiction. Restless, clever, penniless young women of respectable families were no luckier in mid-century America than in Victorian England. Louisa's fellow New Englander and near-contemporary Emily Dickinson chose to avoid the world, as Emily Brönte had done a generation earlier. But to do this was not in the Alcott temperament, nor within her power. *Someone* had to save the unworldly family. 'I will make a battering-ram of my head,' she noted down, 'and make a way through this rough-and-tumble world.' Her Barnard heroines did much the same.

Still, the austere childhood does lie under the stories. It may have increased her taste for colour and mystery. ('I think my natural ambition is for the lurid style'); it also left in her an obstinate streak of fighting nonconformity. This is evident enough in her masterwork *Little Women* (1868), an account of a family who were always prepared, when it came to the point, be out of step. For all its ominous title, it is a preadolescent, hopeful book; Jo with her writing, Beth with her music, Amy the artist – all may get somewhere in the end. Laurie is not yet at College, a place where girls, however gifted, do not go. But, without a persistent publisher, urging her to try 'a girls' novel', would she ever have left the pleasurable Gothic fields? 'I don't enjoy this sort of thing,' she complained as she wrote of the Marches. 'Never liked girls, or knew many, except my sister; but our queer plays and experiences may prove interesting, though I doubt it.' She need not have doubted. Except in her *Hospital Sketches* (1865), which after all had their own drama, she had not looked, or wished to look, at her personal life and scene. Now she did, and the result was a lasting American classic. The demand for further books of the kind was to occupy her for the rest of her working days. Did the thrilling fantasies vanish? Almost, but not quite. 'It has been simmering,' she wrote in her diary of *A Modern Mephistopheles*, a new tale involving mesmerism and hashish, 'ever since I read Faust last year. Enjoyed doing it, being tired of providing moral pap for the young.'

We have to admit, of course, that it is the realist novel, *Little Women*, that keeps the rest afloat. To be sure, a quest is a quest, and who could fail to enjoy the account of the chase? The intrinsic worth of Miss Stern's find is another matter. If only the need for a brisk denouement did not make

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A. M. Barnard force her cast into idiocies of behaviour . . . Yet to describe these tales as scandalous, a spinster's lurid secret, shows not only considerable naïveté but an ignorance of Miss Alcott's main best-seller; for all their nonsense, the tales conform to the Meredithian dictum that, where opponents are not equal, no true drama obtains. Whatever a Barnard heroine lacks in wealth and caste, she more than makes up for in looks and wit and skill. And when her publisher called them 'morally unexceptionable' he knew what he was saying. In none of them does sin go unrebuked. How honest, then, was Miss Alcott in making Jo burn her manuscripts? Was it a moment's gesture to 'Mr Emerson', so long the family's 'intellectual god'? Was her guilt in the *pleasure* of writing? Oddly, the four tales here leave none of that undefined unease which touches us in *Good Wives*, and in the trail of sweet domestic books which follow. In the surrender of these books to contemporary attitudes, their contrived marriage-partnerings, their emasculation and sentiment, indeed, in turning Jo into an earth-mother, they are, it might be argued, rather more morally questionable than any of A. M. Barnard's sin-and-its-wages tales in the present book.

David Leitch

Misfit

Conversations with Marilyn by W. J. WEATHERBY *Robson Books* £3.25

W. J. Weatherby from Heaton Moor, Cheshire, met Norma Jeanne Mortensen from Hollywood in Reno, Nevada – on the set of *The Misfits*. The consequence was a low-key friendship born of affinity and, some 14 years later, this absorbing book.

It is mainly based on a series of conversations which took place in a dreary alcoholics' bar on 8th Avenue, a setting which may have reminded the expatriate Weatherby of sleazy public bars in Manchester during the Fifties. Anyway the lights were dim, the drinks cheap and Marilyn's incognito was never betrayed – although once she was mistaken for a whore. As several million women were trying to imitate her looks at this epoch, being the real thing bestowed a certain anonymity. She could pass for another leaf in the forest.

Her conversation, except for the occasional striking phrase perhaps not her own, was also fairly commonplace. 'I carry Marilyn Monroe around with me like an albatross,' she remarked at their last meeting. And so she did, even if the phrase was probably quoted from one of her attendant gurus. Weatherby, being a practitioner of the Old Journalism, noted down her exact words after their talks in shorthand honed by a thousand magistrates' courts and council chambers. The result is her own confused voice which often seems to emerge through a haze, caused perhaps by a mixture of sleepers, alcohol, Kennedy-obsession and the inflated presence of her larger-than-life colleagues on *The Misfits*.

Among such mythic people, Weatherby's anonymous decency, the prim discreet virtues of Didsbury, where England's provincial conscience resided, must have stood out like a pint of bitter in a cocktail bar. The others had never read the paper he worked for, of course, but they knew it was somehow superior.

Their first encounters in Reno are described with quiet, masterly exactness. Yes, the reader keeps thinking, of course that's how it must have been. Huston, life and art as usual merging uncomfortably, was at his most Hemingwayesque – and uncommitted. The others were all in deep and it's hard to decide who suffered most: Clark Gable, the 'King' who was to die ten days after they finished shooting, Montgomery Clift, also with death on his shoulder, looking 'like someone who wanted to cry but had decided to laugh it off'.

Craig Raine

An Inquiry into Two Inches of Ivory

We live in the great indoors:
the vacuum cleaner grazes
over the carpet, lowing,
its udder a swollen wobble . . .

At night, the switches stare
from every wall like flat-faced
barn-owls, and light ripens
the electric pear.

Esse is percipi – Berkeley knew
the gentle irony of objects, how
they told amusing lies and drew laughter,
if only we believed our eyes.

Daily things. Objects
in the museum of ordinary art.
Two armless Lilliputian queens
preside, watching a giant bathe.

He catches the slippery cubist fish
with perfumed eggs. Another
is a yogi on the scrubbing brush.
Water painlessly breaks his bent
Picasso legs.

Clothes queue up in the wardrobe,
an echo to the eye, or a jangle of Euclid.
The wall-phone wears a pince-nez
even in the dark – the flex
is Jewish orthodox.

Day begins.
The milkman delivers
penguins with their chinking atonal fuss.
Cups commemorate the War
of Jenkins' Ear.
Without thinking, the giant
puts a kettle on the octopus.

Thrillers

Chapman Pincher
The Eye of the Tornado
Chapman Pincher's fifth novel, set in the near future when Britain, governed by its first woman Prime Minister, is threatened by nuclear fallout.
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Rat Trap
B.A. Flight 5106 from Kennedy International is inbound to Heathrow. The flight so far has been uneventful—but when an armed man appears on the flight deck, the crew know this is to be no routine emergency.
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Michael Joseph

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Arthur Miller, adrift in irreconcilable marital and artistic ambivalence, no doubt wondering what irony had driven them to attempt this jinxed venture in a township thriving on the cost of losing at the altar and the tables.

Instead of jumping straight in to confide, she arranged certain tests for Weatherby – sending him to visit Clifford Odets, Mrs Michael Chekhov, widow of the fine actor remembered only as the psychiatrist in *Spellbound* and one of M.M.'s important father figures; and finally to Schwab's drugstore, where aspirant stars hang around combing their hair with narcissistic conviction.

'Now, you've graduated,' she said, after he had completed this tour of her roots. She knew that she could trust him. That meant keeping his mouth shut. Too many men she had trusted had kissed and told – some had even told without kissing. Now she talked to him freely in New York about love, fame and age; an incongruous liaison, the prim scribe from the *Manchester Guardian* and the tired, confused star. By this stage she was a misfit everywhere even in the Kennedy clan. Soon Peter Lawson, an honorary Kennedy, was announcing her at the New York gala for J.F.K. as 'the late Marilyn Monroe', a bitchy in-joke. And the Weatherby/Monroe friendship was to founder, or so one suspects, because he could not bring himself to share her enthusiasm for the White House clan.

In the end, a kind of love emerges; Weatherby returns to the same streets and bars, remembering how she always liked ordinary things without putting on an act; all the joints looked dimmer, faded – or was it just himself?

> But at least one person would never change now, would never grow old. What was it she had told me in the bar so long ago? 'Sometimes I think it would be easier to avoid old age, to die young, but then you'd never complete your life, would you? You'd never wholly know yourself . . .'

Yet finally, this very elegant rake through cold ashes reveals little. Whatever sustenance the late friendship gave Marilyn Monroe, whatever moods she was in at the end of her life, nothing deeply significant is revealed in these desultory conversations. Only watching her wistful performance in *The Misfits* can ever give us an inkling.

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Dream Merchants

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How to fill the days until Woodbern and Wardstein's *next* shockumentary? (Can't wait for that scene in the Oval Office when President Jimmy sobs on God's shoulder because the bottom's fallen out of peanuts.) What better than to limber up on a new Robbins? For, after all, once round a Robbins equals 100 times round the gasworks. 'Okay,' I hear you say, 'no Friday reviewer's ever going to *admit* to liking a Robbins.' But honestly I did try: showering away my prejudices, I pretended the name on the cover was, say, Maria Edgeworth. I tried very hard: but it's no good.

Mr Robbins has been clobbered by ireful lady libbers for his sexist 'macho'. How to appease these acidulated Amazons? Why, by making his latest lay-figure a very liberated lady herself. JeriLee sets off as a walking deodorant ad, finding most fellow humans sadly soiled by greed, lust and hate. She goes banco on becoming a superstar writer – but, alas, lonely lady scribblers can keep afloat, it seems, only on seas of sex, booze and amphetamines. Though the boys keep coming (and how!) her Vibrator remains this girl's best friend. For 448 pages – as arousive as Kleenex: thin, cold, glassy, faceless writing off which all critical comment slides away utterly foiled. One thing – there aren't any misprints. Except on the blurb, when it speaks of Robbins's 'acute awareness of current situations and human problems'. For 'acute awareness' read 'cute awareness'.

A relief after this to get away into literacy, into language as precision tool and not as spray-gun overkill. In David Hughes's sixth novel, Richard Flaxman, a forties-ish businessman, thinks he's getting away for a late-winter break when he boards the plane for Nice. But a 'presence' embarks with him, and not even a series of rapidly-downed duty-free miniatures can dispel it. Landing, he's dogged across the tarmac and into the terminal by Hunter, a failed, now retired schoolmaster who, hailing from Flaxman's own home-town has, it *seems*, simultaneously set off for a dismal Flanders reunion and is now, through a surrogate-psyche, exorcising the furtive guilt of his career – a crossing of the wires which liberates Flaxman from his own sense of a life not so much misused as missed.

No fan of the personality-takeover ploy (its usually such a glib swap for a more substantial *donnée*), I was held by the 100 charged pages through which Flaxman is racked and torn by the unappeased daemon of this desperate old man. For Mr Hughes clusters qualities not often found in conjunction: the gift of assimilating a genuine metaphysical dynamic without any sense of strain or show-off; the ability to merge time-tiers with much narrative resonance while still keeping them clearly stratified; the knack of pinning velleities and the merest shreds of mood with uncommon precision. There's an intense interaction of time, place and thought planes, but no intellectual confusion. Mr Hughes has the authorial good manners to work very hard before expecting us to, and re-reading only confirms the power of the book's compression and the authenticity of its impulse.

Little to hold one from Calder's latest bunch of newcomers, though David Galloway's split-narrative novella 'Melody Jones' has its moments. Melody, a faded hotcha with a heart of platinum, runs a strip-and-hustle bar in Buffalo and, beneath a terrifying *maquillage*, belts out some busty Streisand numbers to the general gaiety. His passion for Dixon, a young married half way out of the closet, is observed by Brenda the Breast (there's 2,000 bucksworth of silicone in them there melons), Sandra Mae the Go-Go Girl, Joe the Barman, Chip the Pianist and Sammy the Queen – each annotating the *affaire* with a monologue of startling, stridulant virtuosity. As ever, with this genre, the tone is raucous and garish to a degree – but there are some wildly funny pages.

Don't know why the idea of Christ's Coming a Second time as a Woman should already seem so tired and Sixties-ish. It *could* be serious, I suppose, and not just smart. But clearly, to get into orbit, it needs a much more powerful intellectuo-imaginative launch-pad than Mr Symonds can provide. His working of the theme is weighed down by whimsy (characters talk archly of walking up rainbows – for all the world like Wodehouse's Madeline Bassett who, you recall, scared the spats off Bertie Wooster by referring to the stars as God's daisy-chain), and the characterisation is carbon-paper-thin. But what really sinks the book is its stylistic penury. The insistence of endless simple predicates and the absence of all syntactical intricacy or variation becomes maddeningly monotonous.

To give you an idea. The book is written, mostly, in very short sentences. Thousands of them. Like that one. Not even real sentences, you see. Any more than that is. Though lots of these little word-squirts are promoted to full paragraph status.

Like this.

Somehow, for all its 'directness', this mode of writing seems oddly pretentious.

Tiring too.

Exceedingly.

And boring.

Very.

Among this week's contributors:

DAVID GARNETT was closely associated with the Bloomsbury Group. One of his early novels, *Lady into Fox*, was published in 1922. His most recent book, *Plough over the Bones*, came out in 1973.

MICHAEL DAVIE is editing Evelyn Waugh's diaries.

NAOMI LEWIS's recent work includes *A Peculiar Music* (published by Bodley Head)

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Opera

Bayan Northcott

Songs of Plays

Falstaff and **Pelléas et Mélisande** *Glyndebourne*
Faust *Covent Garden*

Though the permanence of *Falstaff* as a repertory piece must have been obvious within seconds of curtain-up at the Scala, Milan, on 9 February 1893, it has never quite won the popularity of Verdi's middle-period tragedies. Some critics have simply put this down to its paucity of long, fully-rounded tunes. One fraternity, however, has proved unusually consistent in its attitude. As Busoni wrote in 1894:

> It is really unbelievable how a man of 80 can still do things which he has never done before in his life, and not only that: several things which no one else has ever done before him.

Mahler and Stravinsky must have agreed, for *Falstaff* was to become one of their favourite operas. Puccini, of course, paid it the compliment of outright emulation in *Gianni Schicchi*, but Strauss also modelled a scene of *Der Rosenkavalier* upon the beginning of Verdi's Act Three, while Britten's absorption of its style and methods is to be sensed everywhere in *Albert Herring*. Robert Craft even noticed a copy of the score ready to hand in Schoenberg's study when he visited the ailing master in 1950 and Elliott Carter has cited the cross-cutting of Verdi's ensembles as a prime source of his own techniques of rhythmic and textural montage.

Composers are usually too concerned with the integrity of their own styles to allow themselves unprejudiced exposure to one another's; so that when they do agree – as over Bach or Mozart – this generally indicates a handling of particular musical tendencies so perfected, so paradigmatic as to transcend stylistic limitations altogether. Verdi's individual novelties certainly justified Busoni's amazement. Virtually no one had previously risked juxtaposing extremes of orchestral roughness and delicacy to create such electrical continuities. The dramatic pacing was as unprecedented, and has proved as definitive, as Wagner's opposing amplitude in *Die Meistersinger*. Passages such as Ford's monologue even tease the expectations of opera lovers to functional purpose by presenting strings of short ideas – any one of which *might* develop into a long melody – in a kind of mosaic sequence.

Yet the real wonder is the near infallibility of structure and purity of style with which Verdi has synthesised all these things. The complex rondo form of the garden scene in Act One, for instance, seems to arise effortlessly from the dramatic situation with its two groups of plotters led by Alice and Ford, and it is hard to decide which is the more profoundly comic: the sight of them simultaneously intriguing away secretly in different parts of the stage or the uproarious polyrhythmic ensembles Verdi creates from their superimposed chatter. If the interludes where Nanetta and Fenton escape from their respective groups to each other have been praised more for fragrance than romantic sweep, these duets nonetheless comprise faultless miniatures where a few self-indulgent seconds more could have meant a fatal hesitation in the scenes overall momentum.

For the producer, indeed, the main problem must be how not to get in the way of some cunning compression in Boito's peerless libretto or multiple richness in Verdi's score, and I must confess my heart quailed a little at the prospect of a new Glyndebourne staging by Jean-Pierre Ponnelle. Sure enough there are the usual gratuitous jokes – some of them admittedly funny, as when Falstaff struggles out of the orchestral pit after his ducking – and the usual mania for making everyone move puppet-like in time to the music. But his sets strike an attractive balance between realism and toytown, and his conception of Falstaff himself – finely sung by the American baritone Donald Gramm – is unusually dignified; in fact the courtliness of the Knight's approach to the (not entirely mellifluous) Alice by Kay Griffel visibly sways the lady for an instant. This reversal of the traditional view is heightened by the manic cavortings of the rest of a never less than adequate cast, while the jealousy of Richard Stilwell's magnificently sung Ford generates a quite frightening intensity. John Pritchard pitches into the opening bars at a rate dangerous to diction but soon settles into a reading full of loving detail.

About *Pelléas*, the composers have been more ambiguous. 'It's in very good taste,' remarked an uncomprehending Strauss, but 'no music!' and Carter has talked of 'the boredom of that old gloomy Maeterlinckian dungeon'. There does seem to come a point in it where the symbolist aesthetic that suggested Debussy's radical, almost anti-operatic models in the first place starts to hamper their further development. The first two or three acts can often come over as totally convincing in their adjustment of sonorous image and scene length to an almost actionless drama of poetic intuitions; then I begin to wonder with Stravinsky whether the musical idiom is not a 'too-confining one' for the full five. Despite the mannered repetitions of its famous diction and Debussy's endless recourse to rocking chords for sustaining texture, the work leaves a uniquely beautiful sound world in the mind but its dramatic residue seems far less consequential.

The producer of the new Glyndebourne version, René Terrasson, at least deserves praise for attempting to match Debussy's hieratic austerity instead of softening it with fairy-tale picturesqueness. His characters react with a minimum of expression, often standing motionless for minutes on end to create a freize-like effect reminiscent of a number of turn-of-the-century illustrators. Unfortunately Patrick Robertson's vague grey back-projections of vaults and trees compound the visual dullness of this approach rather than intensifying the numinosity that has evidently been sought. Apart from André Jobin's dry and wobbly Pelléas, the cast is a good one, however, with a firm dark Golaud from Michael Devlin and some chaste soprano phrasing from the Mélisande of Anne-Marie Blanzat, while the gentle radiance and flow of the London Philharmonic under Haitink is quite the most convincing that I have ever heard in this work; ample reason for catching it, if not at Glyndebourne, then at the Proms on 10 August.

Apart from Stravinsky's brief flirtation with Gounod in the late Thirties, few composers have had much to say in favour of that prodigy of opportunist sentimentality, *Faust*. Nonetheless its fugitive charms of melody and orchestration deserve better than the current Covent Garden revival. John Copley's production, complete with Renaissance can-can is unchanged from when I reviewed it 18 months ago and Stuart Burrows repeats his refined but rather small-voiced Faust. The Marguerite and Méphistophélès are new, however: Mirella Freni projecting a rather frayed Jewel Song but rising lustily to her last-scene Salvation Army march, and the imposing Nicolai Ghiaurov involving himself intermittently in the preposterous antics of Gounod's schizoid Prince of Darkness. But once more the incomprehensible diction made one realise how much this opera relies upon a French cast – in a sense, even more than *Pelléas*. The conductor, Jacques Delacote *is* French, but that seemed no adequate excuse for the orchestra's frequent lapses of intonation.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Well-Seasoned

The Winter's Tale *Stratford*
Little Red Hen *Shaw*
What's a Nice Country Like U.S. . . .? *Mayfair*
Leave Him to Heaven *New London*

There's a game I recall playing as a child, which consisted of comparing two nearly identical drawings and awarding myself a point whenever I noticed that (say) one goblin had three buttons on his jacket and the other four. Little did I think I would continue to play Spot the Difference as an adult, but it has been so; and, especially when Shakespeare and Shakespeare performance have been the objects of my efforts, I've run up some pretty spectacular scores. But of late the game has got tougher, because the divergences between

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text and production have got fewer, and even a curious *Winter's Tale* leaves me relatively little to report. Just two liberties have been taken at Stratford. First: Sicily, which was transformed into 19th-century India for the RSC's recent *Much Ado*, now turns out to be Lapland, north Scandinavia, or some other province of the Land of the Midnight Sun, at an equally imprecise period of its history. Second: 'exit, pursued by a bear' has been emended to read 'stands, apprehended by a witch doctor'. At any rate, a grim gentleman wearing an animal mask and brandishing human skulls looms over the frozen Antigonus, who mutters 'this is the chase' and allows himself to be ushered offstage. A little later the same figure reappears, removes his bear's head to reveal the yellowish jowls and droopy whiskers of what seems to be a Chinese magician, and delivers the long speech that Shakespeare has credited to 'Time, the Chorus'.

Still, they are liberties, big liberties, and it's as well that they have a function. John Barton, who directs 'with Trevor Nunn', habitually introduces striking visual imagery as a sort of editorial comment on Shakespeare, and this time his purpose is to distinguish sharply between the two halves of the play. The first shows us a dark, ailing and in some ways evil world: Leontes has destroyed his son, his wife, his friendship with Polixenes, and (so it seems) any prospect of happiness for himself and his numbed court. The second presents us with Florizel and Perdita and all those references to fecundity and growth: suddenly there's youth, hope, reconciliation, even joy. In other words, spring and summer have replaced autumn and winter, a process presumably more dramatic in a part of the world where one solstice is all night and the other all day. Hence, then, the production's furs, snowshoes and souvenir-shop embroidery, the Eskimo blankets that surround the stage for most of the second half, the primitive figures and hieroglyphics etched on to the black background of the first. Hence, too, the transformation of the bear into the voodoo-man, Death, and thence into the Chorus. Time can be a destroyer and can be a creator, or so Barton would have us remember, with his emphasis on cyclical change, decay and renewal.

But one may reasonably ask if it's necessary to turn the play into a Nordic saga in order to make these points: they certainly seem clear enough in Shakespeare. Worse, there were times when I wondered if Barton's absorption with a supposedly suggestive background hadn't led him to neglect more important matters, such as character and acting. Only David Waller, a genial old shepherd, and Barbara Leigh-Hunt, a baleful Paulina, give entirely successful performances. Michael Williams begins by implying that Autolycus is a beaten, pathetic down-and-out, a contention promptly refuted by the character's extraordinary successes as a conman and pickpocket, and so sacrifices much exuberance and fun for a reading he never does or could sustain. Marilyn Taylerson's Hermione seemed to me sufficiently chaste and bewildered, but insufficiently outraged – I say 'seemed' because I was too distracted by her panting vowels and bouncing consonants to be quite sure. Shut your eyes and you could sometimes suppose her to be mimicking a game of squash.

Well, time is often a creator at Stratford, mending and maturing the poorer productions. But I'm not sure that will happen this time, not unless Ian McKellen can fill the strange gap at the centre of his Leontes. He is very good at the appalled wonder that goes with his jealousy ('how can this be?') and very good at the raddled distress that remains when the jealousy is exorcised ('I am ashamed'), but not at all good at expressing the jealousy itself. He proved with his Romeo earlier in the season that he could project sexual longing, but sexual envy, sexual violence and sexual disgust leave him at a loss. He throbs and broods and occasionally rages, but he doesn't give the impression of a man whose stomach is being eaten away by an acid that reason, sense and all the usual alkalines cannot check – and that's what Shakespeare demands in those unpleasantly, embarrassingly intimate passages at the play's start. Shaw once made an interesting distinction between Othello's 'purely melodramatic jealousy' and the 'real article' he sensed in Leontes, 'an unmistakable study of a jealous man from life'. If this is so, McKellen gives us Othello and not Leontes, an exterior grief and not an internal laceration: a man wounded in the head and heart, not one mutilated in the abdomen, bowels and groin. Without that, *The Winter's Tale* must always be incomplete.

The *Little Red Hen* is a Glaswegian granny who spends the evening proving to a chauvinistic descendant that the SNP is a shoddy conspiracy and full-blooded socialism the only solution for the deprived and oppressed north of the Tweed. Actually, 'proved' is a misnomer, because the actors are the Scottish 7:84 Company, which has its fixed view of economic injustice, and the author John McGrath, who is clearly coming to regard the theatre as a forum for evangelism, for stirring invitations to the foot of the working-class cross, rather than for argument and debate. I don't think any waverers will be won over by the bald reduction of Ramsay-Mac to a creepy undertaker, slyly interring socialism, or of poor Beatrice Webb to Lady Bountiful, complacently presiding over a corrupt salon. That's not a very persuasive way of disposing of Fabianism or of that 'realism' or 'pragmatism' which tends to infect Labour in office. On the other hand, 7:84 and McGrath put over their partisan view of history with energy, verve and, especially at the end, when the 'Tartan Tories' come blinking and grinning from the political cupboard, a cutting wit. Anyone who wants to learn more about left-wing objections to Scots nationalism would do well to see it.

What's a Nice Country . . . ? is a perky, lissome American revue which has nothing to say about America except the obvious; and *Leave Him to Heaven* is, on the face of it, another example of that nostalgia which is currently reducing theatreland to Alice's pool of tears. The story, sketchily involving the boy-next-door, his ascent to pop-hero, his martyrdom under a suffocating pile of fans, is the merest excuse for replaying all those Fifties favourites. But Ken Lee writes and Philip Hedley directs with humour and detachment, and a sociological side of me was riveted. Why all those songs about teenage death, teenage suicide? Why all that gummy religiosity? Wasn't it all an attempt to give status to the insecurities and tensions, the transitory affections and fears, of the listeners? A picture builds up: a jittery 16-year-old, long denied much in the way of money, love or literacy, being relentlessly soft-soaped, manipulated and robbed by hard-eyed men in recording-studios in Wardour Street. *That*, surely, was what pop-culture was about in those 'innocent' Fifties, just as much as today.

Films

John Coleman

Wizard of Oz

Sunday Too Far Away *Warner West End 4*
Mes Petites Amoureuses *Continentale*
Vigilante Force *London Pavilion*
In Celebration *Curzon*

Australia is not famous for its films. Cricketers, great acreage with few people, and – closer to home – an eerie, lipsticked Barry Humphries waving gladdies under a taffeta hat at ecstatic audiences who pay to laugh at caricatures of men and women they imagine to be more violable, vulgarer, than they: that is the land of Oz as most of us know it. Here comes a strange, tough, unendearing and rather good movie to shift one's focus. It may even be that the old British reserve and reservations have to swerve, like the bowling of that great slinger Jeff Thomson, in the general direction of melodrama: one has been slipped a quickie. Ken Hannam's *Sunday Too Far Away* sets off breathing fairly heavily: a car crashing in a rusty desert, a man clambering out and walking towards nowhere in particular. And, up to here, one is prepared for yet another homely disaster, outguessing the outcome. What emerges is an extremely sweaty hero, Foley (Jack Thompson), a blond brute who does his sandy trek, and then lands up in his kind of territory, sheep-shearing ground: 1955, a bad time, as an occasional radio makes clear, for swift fleecers. And our Foley is the fastest wool-gatherer in the neighbourhood, which is touched in with a kind of fierce dexterity. A gutsy chap, winner or loser, Foley finds himself (and, then, as it were, abandons the chase for identity), going in close, very close with his electric razor. The film somehow makes him and his foul-mouthed associates authentic. It does this by permitting itself oddities.

Men's buttocks, for instance, are seen to wobble like jelly in a wash-room while a silly, stag competition happens about who'll clean his dirty jeans faster. There is a roustabout sense of manliness, but of a put-down order. The daughter of the rich daddy who raised the money in the first place, to

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buy this motley crew of croppers, invites herself (and so the camera) to a long look at the fellows cutting away at the wool: the image travels down a line of sheep, there is some blood shown, the film here becomes precisely skin deep. It is not cricket, however you translate it. It is persuasive, pained, throwaway. I think it a pity that the movie tries to buy respectability through a political gambit. The shearers went on strike, won: Mr Hannam does not need this, any more than he needs an early intervention by a youngster who hardly figures again. This to register that the beaut event probably went through some changes on the way to your locals. Writing this with a degree of personality hard to avoid for a cricket-lover, I felt about this much as I would feel about a hard-head like Thommo gusting himself past the stumps on the way to an edge or, amazingly, the bails. Its residual has the scent of a medieval ballad, the ordinary thrust of a game played brutally. One-off, and I'll take the strine.

M. Eustache was last heard of in these parts when he made an extremely long talkathon for cinema: it had a pretty enticing title, *The Mother and the Whore*, and was conceivably autobiographical – any normal person is supposed, is indeed encouraged to think that spilling his or her guts for royalty, or royalties, is a fair way to manipulate experience – and more than reasonably, for something that length, a right old listen. *Mes Petites Amoureuses* is a bleak, back-lashing series of glances at a boy, Daniel (Martin Loeb), growing up not too distant from the kid who might have been Truffaut in *Les Quatre Cent Coups*. If one had to cast it in British terms, then the mushrooming moppet would be John Howard Davies; meanwhile, it is lots of meek profile, a hangdog walk with wrists resting, a long lope – one can almost hear the director's voice – into an infant's middle distance.

This Daniel is quite a sexy 13-year-old, a serious village number who has a strictly awful heritage: a blazing, permissive granny and her daughter, a perky-lipped, underwritten mum who summons young Daniel to a lousy flat in the provinces: she (Ingrid Caven, who is a red-beaked refugee from Fassbinder here, anyway nasty beyond the call of duty, with a Spanish lover and no motivation), lets him roam the streets – which means a chance for a director to indulge his Frenchness, showing a clip from *Pandora and the Flying Dutchman* as his child-star leans forward to touch up and kiss a girl in the row before him. It is a well-made pseudo-lyric nonsense, which is substantially more than could be said of *Vigilante Force*, an instance of what happens when a little money falls spare: a crazy pavement of an affair, which Kris Kristofferson appears to be conducting with himself – as a villain, against the run of his image – and with dialogue, puffed balloons by wordsmith and onlie begetter George Armitage, who flashily misguided this would-be parody of comic-strips. The balloons keep bursting. *In Celebration* is Lindsay Anderson re-doing his stage production for the screen, marvellously re-doing it. One wishes his stoic, anarchic entries into world cinema had had as much style.

Television

James Cameron

Turtle Diary

I am a bit uneasy about this new technique of fancy-dress charade-cum-history-lesson, of which the latest example was BBC-2's *Goodbye America*, a reconstitution of the happenings leading up to the imminent American War, centring on a vital Commons debate. It hasn't yet been overdone, but I have a feeling it soon will be, just because, up to now, it has worked rather well.

The idea, if you haven't caught up with it, is that of a historical incident performed by actors in character and costume, but interpreted by contemporary and only too recognisable television reporters, in their ordinary Seventies gear and their current Seventies attitudes. In this event one had to assume that the elegant 18th-century debate in Westminster was being observed by the cameras (and accepting the cameras) and observed and *commentated upon* (an odd thing to do to Edmund Burke, for example) in some sort of space-time control-room inhabited by Robert McKenzie. Mr McKenzie did it excellently, turning the Colonists' Revolt and the anger of the Country Gentlemen into something straight out of the *Daily Telegraph*.

The whole thing was profoundly phoney, yet more than half the time it worked beautifully. The sequence where Burke and Fox tore into Lord North – looking very like Christopher Soames with a hangover, though indeed it was but Clive Swift in padding and a wig – was splendidly recorded, splendidly shot, and splendidly cut. The device whereby people like Wilkes were brought into the action by way of Westminster, the combination of idioms, the delightful contemporary portraiture with a subtle hindsight, were brilliantly realised.

There was a similar experiment, if you remember, a week or two ago, when Yorkshire TV did *The General Strike* in much the same terms, except that 1926 could provide authentic archive material. Another factor is that Robert Kee has a timelessly non-period countenance, a face for all seasons, while Bob McKenzie has a cheery face – like a bun – that could never be other than of our place and age. Mike Townson's special unit made it triumphantly this time, but they'll have to be sparing in future.

Ever since the days of Dr Kildare, TV has been obsessed with hospitals, institutionalised trouble, sad old souls, buoyant juveniles in white coats, nurses, buttons and bowls. It is easy to understand why. Hospitals are necessarily locations of exploitable drama confined in a manageable situation, spatially limited yet providing a great variety of backgrounds, vaguely sinister machinery, suggestively murmured jargon, obedient girls, omniscient father-figures and poor old blokes stricken with the palsy.

I am a great frequenter of hospital programmes, as indeed I am of hospitals, and I watch with penetrating care for solecisms. I observe a change of style in them comparable to the changing approach to policeman-stories. Just as the cosy *Dixon* image got roughed up a lot by *Z Cars* days, so have the hospital romances moved a long way since *Emergency Ward Ten*. If cops can be bent it follows that Ward Sisters can be sour. Both concepts would have been rejected even ten years ago.

ATV's *General Hospital* has not yet caught up with the times. This show has, for some unidentifiable reason been promoted from kiddies'-time in the afternoon, where it belonged, to a standard evening spot. Its blood-stream still runs anticoagulant, however, presumably to counteract the clots in the production office, and there is more sweetness and light about than any programme can stand. *Angels* on BBC-1 is quite another cup of saline solution, despite its ghastly title. Come to think of it, the Angels' idea may be somebody's idea of satire, to oppose the stereotype of the selfless uncomplaining cool-hand-on-the-brow Nurse which most people cherish, and very properly too. The nurses in *Angels* are a pretty crotchety lot, maladjusted, fed up, sulky, and not infrequently a little tight. The notion of turning angels into human beings, just as venal and testy and occasionally stupid as policemen, is very salutary. So far from diminishing the saintliness of these little lovelies, it enhances it.

However, all these propositions receded into another dimension on the impact of BBC-1's Tuesday documentary, *Surgery of Violence*, shot, *en verité*, in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. This was, of course, for real: a night in an Ulster casualty station after a session of exceptional city brutality. What was absorbing was the manner in which reality imitated art: the *choreography* of all that activity, the unselfconscious drill and discipline of every individual committed to a fixed action, part of a purpose that has no time for sentiment or even, one might think, compassion, only the salvation of some horribly damaged body, no matter whose, and *now*. You couldn't have scripted it. Or you could not have scripted it better.

The real struggle for survival, though, is usually still among our lowlier friends. Turtles, for instance, have a rougher time even than Ulstermen. BBC-2's *World About Us* series, which is almost invariably worth watching, came up with a beauty in *The Great Turtle Mystery*, an almost Shakespearean tragedy of the problems of the marine turtles of Costa Rica in managing to keep their species alive. This moved me no end, I may say, largely because one of my peculiarities is that I believe the turtle-tortoise family, the shell-men, to be the elect of God, the least demanding of creatures, with the perfect relationship with Man, in that they have absolutely none. I have studied them for years, and learned from them nothing whatever, except devotion.

This very sad film, written by Hugh Falkus, showed how this great multitude of gracious creatures, female to a man (they mate at sea; the males do not come ashore), struggle up the beach to lay their eggs – their eggs in tens of millions, because hardly any of them survive. They are devoured by vultures and seabirds. Those that survive to

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hatch must run an awful gauntlet, or rather crawl, very insecurely, back to the safety of the sea. Only one in thousands survives. No wonder the female Marine Turtle has this expression of settled melancholy, familiar to those of us who hold her dear.

Incidentally, and as a last word: I wonder how much priceless time is wasted nightly on the box with all these footling 'introductory themes' – signature-patterns, logos, identification-tunes. Does *everything* have to have its tracked trademark? Assuming they run up to half-a-minute a programme, then there is anything up to 20 lost minutes a night, on what were doubtless excellent but are now wholly sterile clichés. I remember that years ago I had a series of my own, with a marvellous little introductory tune by Johnnie Dankworth. After a few weeks of this I could have shot Mr J. Dankworth for taking up all our expensive footage; the poor man was not even aware of having done it anyway. What's more, I have long forgotten how it went.

Art

Robert Melville

Father Bear

Tolstoi *British Library*
Drawings by Stanley Spencer *Thomas Gibson Fine Art*

It's a bit like changing to the metric system to start thinking of Leo Tolstoy as Lev Tolstoi, but the catalogue of the Tolstoi exhibition presented by the British Library in its gallery at the British Museum is adamant, and fortunately 'Lev' is friendly and more Russian than 'Leo'. If you were expecting a museum exhibition devoted to the world's greatest novelist to be at least as spectacular as the 'Berlioz' or the 'Byron' you will probably be disappointed. There are no photographic blow-ups to convey some sense of the vast spaces covered by *War and Peace,* no big painting of cossacks by Ilya Repin, no sound of *In the Steppes of Central Asia,* no mock-up of the little wayside station where Tolstoi died, not even an example of the English 19th-century genre pictures which influenced his conception of painting as 'significant stillness'. But the sober little show at the BM, with its precious manuscript pages and first editions is totally in debt to Russian museums, and evidently the Soviet wanted no truck with capitalist bravura. All the same I think we would have been fairer to him than Lenin who called him a great artist when he was defending the peasants and a landlord when treating Christ as a good man.

Almost the only concessions to a public not consisting entirely of Russian scholars are the family photographs and a reconstruction of Tolstoi's study at Yasnaya Polyana, his country estate (landlord as writer). The study is simply furnished and the only obvious luxury is the silver samovar. Above the bookcase are prints of the two putti leaning against the ledge in the foreground of the *Sistine Madonna,* a choice dictated by his love of children. Otherwise there is scarcely anything of pictorial interest; a few conventional portraits in paint and bronze and several illustrations of the novels by Russian artists, including L. D. Pasternak, father of Boris, are far from first-rate. The one exception is a highly effective colour lithograph by the Soviet artist Vasnetsov. It was published in 1938 in an edition of Tolstoi's translation from the English of *The Three Bears.* I've never seen a better illustration for children. The bears have not yet returned from their walk and the little girl is settled in tiny bear's tiny chair eating up the porridge in his tiny bowl. The picture is matter-of-fact yet full of the mystery of the forest, like the story itself. Father bear's chair is a massive wooden ladder-back painted black and has something of the tremendous patriarchal presence of Tolstoi himself.

Tolstoi's translation was an improvement on a story that was already a masterpiece; in his version big, shaggy father bear is named Michael Ivanovitch, she-bear is Nastasia Petrovna and the cub is Mishutka. It all somehow connects with a superb photograph of Tolstoi, big and shaggy with a long white beard, talking to his little granddaughter who is sitting on the arm of his chair, utterly absorbed by what he is saying. He could be telling her the story of the three bears. He could be Christ as an old man.

The exhibition of 50 drawings by Stanley Spencer at Thomas Gibson Fine Art is a selection from the Astor Collection, and the show is being held to launch a handsome book illustrating the entire collection of 158 drawings, published by the same gallery. They are intimately autobiographical and often refer to a time long before they were executed. They are the work of a brilliant draughtsman and an unashamed eroticist. He himself appears in many of them, always in the closest proximity to a woman, usually in interiors in which the space is extremely claustrophobic, as if they are locked in a cupboard. The drawing of a woman stooping to sew a button on to clothing he is wearing is accompanied by a note:

> I like to celebrate all lovable acts. All ordinary acts such as this of Daphne sewing a button on my waistcoat are religious things and a part of perfection.

Another is entitled *Annunciation: me in a bath with Daphne,* and others depict Stanley tying Hilda's shoe-lace, Elsie ironing, Daphne and Stanley brushing their hair and standing so close together that one wonders how they manage to wield their brushes, and in two scenes that are in the book but not in the show, Daphne and Stanley are sitting in the lavatory, side by side on a two-holer. Spencer's delight in the female belly led him into figurative exaggerations, and he gives the women he loved graceless bulges and awkward, vulnerable postures. But in *Patricia Nude* the figure is suddenly beautiful as well as desirable, and none of the drawings diverges from Tolstoi's belief that 'art should cause violence to be set aside'.

Weekend Competition

No 2416 **Set by Snubbin**

Time for another old stager: anagrams of monikers, cultural or political, past or present. Warden Sparrow's version of Asa Briggs – 'Sir Gas Bag' – will be hard to improve on. No limit; by 25 June.

Result of No 2413 Set by Caduta Massi

Competitors were asked to evoke any classic from a female pen in the form of a single *tanka*, five lines of 5,7,5,7, and 7 syllables respectively.

Report **by Fat Jeff**

T. A. K. Thomson sent in his entry – on *Pride and Prejudice* – in Chinese. I rather liked it, actually (it certainly ended strongly), but when I came to dish out the prizes I felt that it didn't *quite* make it. Too many *supatankas* around. They get £3 each.

Persuasion
'Hello, sailor!' says
Sweet Anne, but then (a bum steer)
Gives him the breeze. Years
Later though . . . (*Travel Note*: Wear
Rubber soles on Cobb at Lyme.)

Sonnets from the Portuguese
I love you – yes, I
Sure do love you, Bobby Baby.
Loving you's my thing –
And, what's more, kid, I *love* you . . .
(What was that that Byron said?)
MARTIN FAGG

Middlemarch
Vibrant, brainy Dot
Weds wan, wet, booksy old clot.
But young Lad Is Law
Whose behests she can't ignore –
And she gets her Will, what's more.

Villette
Prissy miss, agog
For thrills as a pedagogue,
Falls for sarky Frog –
He drowns at sea in a fog.
My God, this book is a bog!
ROB HAROLD

Little Women
Teenangels growing
Meg, the good egg, finds marriage
Beth saith 'Yeth' to death
Amy-able for flirting
Jo's writing flows like a Brook.

Jane Eyre
No Mum. School chum dies.
Sob! Gets job. Loves Nob. Surprise!
Spouse in house; nuts! Flies!
Unwed. Half-dead. New friends tend.
Yearns. Returns. Weds. Beds. The End.
GERRY HAMILL

Emma
Emma decided
She would marry her friends off
Including herself,
Making absolutely sure
She'd marry the Toff.
AUBREY BUSH

Wuthering Heights
Heathcliff hath Cath cleft:
Heathcliff, Cath hath cleft all through.
Uncouth Heathcliff left.
They thriveth, then dieth: – though
Cath doth Heathcliff cleaveth to.
JETHRO B. TUCKET

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Assiac

Chess Board

No 1385 **Learn from Losses**

Preferably one's own and who of us would complain of lack of material? Now here comes Sam Reshevsky with 311pp entitled *Great Chess Upsets* (at *Faber* for £3.95) and presents 17 of the greatest players of all time and with losses only, each one significant and somehow instructive. After Anderssen and Morphy the list contains all the world champions from Steinitz to Karpov, though, oddly enough – why, oh why? – Euwe is missing. Of the non-champions we have Keres, Larsen, Korchnoy and, of course, Reshevsky himself; let's start with him by picking one of the rare occasions when he actually was the victim of the hair-raising time scrambles he used to let himself in for. White against R. Byrne at Chicago 1973: /6rk/p5bp/1p1Q4/2p5/2P5/1P2R1B1/q5PK/8/. With his 'flag' trembling in the balance and only seconds left for his last two moves before the time control Sammy failed to see that Re7 would force the win almost instantly; instead he blundered 39) Be5?? and was knocked out by . . . Qg2;† . . . Be5:†.

At Stockholm 1912 young Alekhine wasn't quite as famous yet as he would grow to be but certainly arrogant enough to overreach himself when Black against a 'nobody' such as Fridlizius. / 2r2rk1 / bb3pp1 / p1pq2kt1 / 1p1pP1QKt/3p3p/1BP2Kt1P/PP3PPK/3R2R1/.

Unwilling to admit the need of simplifying by . . . Qe7 the proud young Russian blundered **27) . . .Qe6; 28) cd:,c5?** Again too impetuous while missing his last chance of . . .Qe7 with a tenable game, albeit a P down; **29) Kth4:,cd:; 30) Rge1, Bb8; 31) f4,Qe7** Too late!; **32) Ktf6†!!,gf:; 33) gf:, Bf4:†; 34)Qf4:,Qf1:** Relatively best; **35) Ktg6:,Qe4; 36) Kte7†,Kh8; 37) Rd4:!,Qh7; 38)Qh4,Rc4; 39)**

Now Karpov-Korchnoy 1974 the second match-game in which the youngster produced a surprise /2r3k1/pp1bpp1p/3p1KtpQ/q7/2r1P1P1/2Kt2P2/PPP1Kt3/2KR3R/.

Black had just doubled Rooks with the idea of the familiar sacrifice on c3, but Karpov thwarted it by **19) Rd3!,R(5)c5** Intending to sop g5, but alas, it doesn't; **20) g5,Rg5:; 21) Rd5!,Rd5:; 22) Ktd5:,Re8** The alternative . . .Qd8 wouldn't save him either; **23) Ktef4,Bc6; 24) e5!,Bd5:** Or . . .de: 25) Ktf6:†,ef:; 26) Kth5, etc. **25) ef:,ef:; 26) Qh7:†, Kf8; 27) Qh8†.**

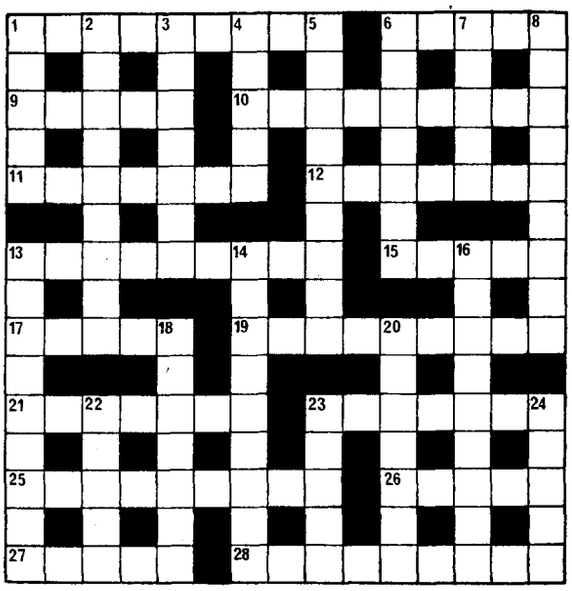
To stick to the theme of 'upsets' the 4-pointer for beginners is a game position in which (Black against Pilnik) Sammy may well have wondered why his opponent didn't, at long last, resign. After White's next move the question was answered. For 6 ladder-points **B** is a win achieved in a mere 4 moves, the last one a waiting move to force Black into zugzwang. **C** (for 7) a win too, achieved in a mere 6 moves of subtle action. Helpful hint: There will be a new Black Queen, a pathetically helpless lady. Usual prizes, entries by 21.6.

A: Pilnik-Reshevsky 1942: /5Q2/kp6/p7/P7/2p1p3/4q3/8/7K/.
B: Leonid Kubbel: /1bKt1r3/2pp4/P7/kP2kt3/P7/1K6/8/6B1/.
C: Kozlovsky: /16/pp6/8/kb3Ktp1/7P/1K6/4B3/.

Competition Report Held Over

Weekend Crossword 1168

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1168, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 22 June.



ACROSS

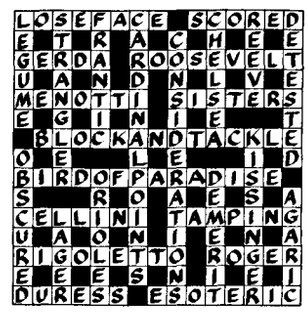
1. Comedy in which punishment is followed by sign of approval (9).
6. 'I always —— at my party's call' (Gilbert) (5).
9. Call nothing wrong which is not foreign (5).
10. It is not safe to act without rage if we are missing (9).
11. Writings for the masses (7).
12. Potential star in a star (7).
13. Nightmare threat to favourite? (4, 5).
15. Actor with two relatives (5).
17. A place in the country far less often (5).
19. Aphrodite as she appears in diminished form (9).
21. One who gets paid a pound although only a novice (7).
23. Comforted and thus put in spirits (7).
25. Train once in a new style and box (9).
26. Room to be included in what tickles one's fancy (5).
27. Notices about ten but there are only two (5).
28. The canter turns into a leap (9).

DOWN

1. Males go freely in place of witches (5).
2. '—— voices prophesying war' (Coleridge) (9).
3. Town shows the results of firing on a sailor (7).
4. For work try following this river (5).
5. South-coast place which shows what is on a sovereign (9).
6. Mount in strength for the war is over here (7).
7. Schubert's fish (5).
8. Not thought much of but is added in wrongly (9).
13. Standstills although there is a new deal in the workplace (9).
14. Shuffle the back row (9).
16. Dismissal when there is a mistake over the round (4,5).
18. Confections which sound as if they will do for holy days (7).
20. Spoil overtime medical treatment (7).
22. Steal a girl with a kiss (5).
23. Fish goes quietly as sailors come up and surround it (5).
24. Money which is essential for education (5).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1166



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Apply: **Pam Marshall, YVFF, 7 Leonard Street, London EC2 01-251 0034.**

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The salary for this post will be substantial. Further information and an application form can be obtained from the **General Secretary, Trades Union Congress, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.**

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WELLINGTON SCHOOL, PENICUIK, MIDLOTHIAN

Applications are invited from qualified

RESIDENTIAL CARE STAFF, TEACHERS and others

particularly those with experience of working with difficult children, for vacant posts in teams responsible for the day to day care of children in the house units at the above school.

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Further details and application forms etc. from The Headmaster, Wellington School, Penicuik, Midlothian EH26 8PT, to whom completed forms must be returned by 30 June 1976.

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THIRD-IN-CHARGE

responsible to the Headmaster for the residential care arrangements at the above School.

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and

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Application forms and further particulars for the above post may be obtained from the Personnel Officer, Western Health Board, Merlin Park Regional Hospital, Galway. The latest date for receipt of completed application forms is 5 p.m. on 30 June, 1976.

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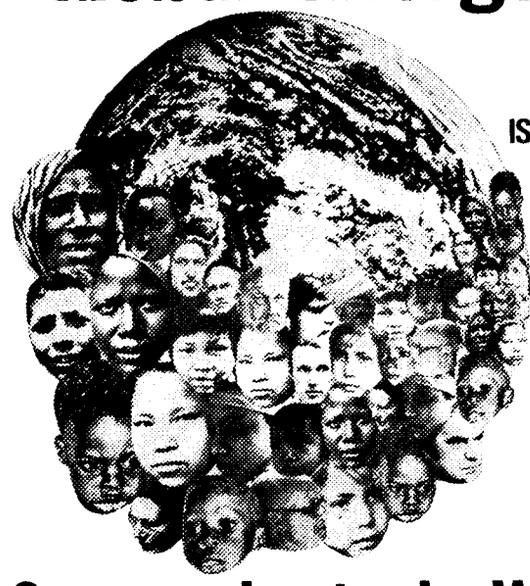

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NEW STATESMAN
Vol. 91 No. 2360

Contents

760 **James Fenton:** Spotlight on Politics
761 **John Porteous:** Mr Healey's Ninety Days
762 **Naomi Shepherd:** Professor Yadin's Gamble
763 **Mary Holland:** A Gay Time in Belfast
764 **Donald Gould:** Drug Companies and the Third World
765 **Alexander Cockburn:** Jimmy Comes Home
766 **Murray Sayle:** Sailor Off the Midway
766 **Roger Woddis:** Nice One, Jimmy
768 **Yvonne Roberts:** A Common Way of Life
770 **R. H. Tawney:** Labour and Honours
771 **Crucifer:** London Diary
772 **Tom Baistow:** U Too, A.J.P.?
772 **Arthur Marshall:** First Person
774 **Letters to the Editor**

Summer Books & Arts
777 **David Garnett:** Virginia Woolf
778 **Julian Symons:** Simon Raven

Other reviews by Michael Davie, Claire Tomalin, Anthony Howard, Neal Ascherson, Alan Ryan, Alethea Hayter, John Fowles, Naomi Lewis, David Leitch, Martin Fagg

789 **Bayan Northcott:** Opera
789 **Benedict Nightingale:** Theatre
790 **John Coleman:** Films
791 **James Cameron:** Television
792 **Robert Melville:** Art
792 **Weekend Competition**
793 **Chess and Crossword**

Poems by Peter Porter and Craig Raine

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THE HAMBLEDON GALLERY, 42 Salisbury St, Blandford, Dorset. Henry Moore, etchings and lithographs. Until 30 June.

TATE GALLERY, Millbank, SW1. The national collections of British painting of all periods, modern foreign painting and sculpture. Coffee shop and licensed restaurant. *Weekdays 10-6. Sunday 2-6.*

Meetings

BRITAIN AND IMMIGRATION. A series of lectures, films and discussions arranged by the Runnymede Trust at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, SW1. Tuesday 15 June 7 p.m. 'Colour and Immigration: ethnic minorities in Britain today'. Speaker — Tom Rees, Director, Runnymede Trust. Film — Tunde's Film. Admission 50p public; 35p ICA members and students.

A FINDHORN EVENING. Peter & Eileen Caddy will show 2 new films about the Community: Royal Institution, Albemarle St. W1, Friday 18 June 7.30. Advance tickets only, 50p — pickup from Wildwood House, 24 Floral St, WC2, or by post (s.a.e. please) from Turnstone, 37 Upper Addison Gdns, W14.

RALF DAHRENDORF will deliver the Fifth Chorley Lecture on 'A Confusion of Powers: Politics by Jurisdiction and the Partisan Administration of Law' in the Founders' Room at the London School of Economics, Houghton St, WC2 on Wednesday, 23 June at 5.30 p.m. Admission Free without Ticket.

AFRICA CENTRE: African Leaders—Anwar Sadat. An evaluation of his life and policies by Peter Mansfield, journalist and author. Tues. 15 June 6.30 p.m. Adm. 40p, Studs 25p. 'Pilgrimages'—two films, Mecca, the Forbidden City and Tabaski, a Senegalese festival. Wed. 16 June 6.30 p.m. Adm. 50p, Studs 30p. 38 King St, WC2. 836 1973.

RT HON. DAVID ENNALS MP, Secretary of State DHSS, will speak on 'Mental Disorder in the Family', in Committee Room 10, House of Commons, on Wed. 23 June at 6.15 p.m. All welcome. Organised by Labour Campaign for Mental Health.

MEDICAL NEMESIS? Day Conference. 'Is Medicine truly Healing?' Are our models of health and illness adequate? Conference will consider the paradigm shift in medicine and medical nemesis. Speakers: Honor Bickford, John Bickford FRCS, Dr John Bradshaw, Dr Hugh Sanderson. 10 a.m. to 5.15 p.m. on Saturday 19 June. At Maria Assumpta College, 23 Kensington Sq., London W8. Admission £1.25. Programmes and tickets from: Teilhard Centre For The Future of Man, St Mark's Chambers, Kennington Park Rd, London SE11 4PW. Tel. 01-582 9510.

WORLD DEVELOPMENT MOVEMENT Focus Group Conference: 'After UNCTAD What Now?' Sat. 19 June at Royal Commonwealth Society, 18 Northumberland Ave, WC2. Chairman: Lord Caradon, Speakers: Gamani Corea, Jan Pronk, Lord Brigginshaw, Richard O'Brien. Fee £2. 01-930 6733 ext 2.

THE COMING WORLD TEACHER and the Masters of the Ageless Wisdom, from the esoteric Teachings of Alice A. Bailey for The New Age. Talks by Benjamin Creme, Friends' House, Euston Rd, NW1. Thurs. 17, Tues. 22 & 29 June 7 p.m. Free.

THEOSOPHY. Public Talk & Questions. Sun. 13 June 8 p.m. Free. 'Theosophy & Practical Charity'. S.a.e. for prog., book list & literature. ULT, 62 Queen's Gdns, W2.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE, 54 Holland Park, W11. Sun. 13 June 5 p.m. Swami Bhavyananda on 'The Katha Upanishad'. Wed. meeting at 6.45 p.m. All welc. Vedanta magazine, 40p.

BUDDHIST SOCIETY, 58 Eccleston Square, London SW1. Sat. 12 June 3 p.m. 'Open Day' 15 June 6.30 p.m. 'Introducing Buddhism'. All welc. Send s.a.e. for full prog.

Courses

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